Hope as a Journey: An Ethnographic Study of the Phenomenon of Hope as Experienced by Hindu and Christian Members of the Indian Diaspora in the Metropolitan Chicago Area

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Abstract:
This research explores hope in the lives of Indian diaspora in the US. through the ethnographic lens of qualitative research. Using participant observation, visual methods and interviewing, an 18-month study was focused on the experience of hope in the lives and reflections of Hindu and Christian Indian diaspora in and around Chicago.

Through this research, this ethnographic data portrays hope as a journey over a chasm where vectors of influence converge and must be negotiated. The ethnographic accounts of hope in the lives of the Hindu and Christian diaspora suggest three main foci of hope in the population studied: the hope to be accepted, the hope to make a contribution and the hope to be true to oneself. Through the ethnographic narratives explored in three thematic chapters, this study presents new data and analyses on the roles of women in transmitting cultural and religious tradition to the next generation, on South Asian Christians in the US diaspora, and it offers “close attention” to the Indian diaspora as called for in recent literature on South Asian Diaspora.

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INTRODUCTION

Questions about hope have been examined for centuries, culminating in extensive discussion across disciplines, especially theology and philosophy. Empirical research on hope has only recently been added to the compilation, with contributors recognizing that much more is needed for exploring this rich phenomenon. This study offers 18 months of ethnographic research with the Hindu and Christian Indian diaspora in the metropolitan Chicago area regarding experiences of hope which elicited rich data emanating from the thoughts, words and actions of those involved. Before describing the research questions that drove the study, the arguments that resulted from the data, and an overview of the contents of the thesis, I will begin by providing a brief window into some initial issues by sharing four iconic interviews from my study, allowing the reader to "hear" the voices of the participants and to detect themes early on that will emerge in the chapters to come.

These particular interviews were chosen because they demonstrate some typical elements of hope that will permeate the thesis. Two of these interviews were from Hindu participants and two are from Christian participants. The symbols used for hope demonstrated the range that were typical such as photographs, letters, digital images, words referencing physical symbols and no symbols or images at all. Some contained semblances of pain and the past as a backdrop to hope and some were future-oriented and joyful. Some were about self, some about God and some about others. As such, the four together provide a representative sample of images and ideas of the data that came from 19 photo-elicitation interviews, and from the culmination of data from the entire study.

To protect the confidentiality of the participants of the study, all names have been changed and some identifying details slightly altered.

Interview #1: "Sindu"

One participant, whom I will refer to as "Sindu," responded to a request to participate in my study posted by an Indian acquaintance on her Facebook page. She agreed to meet me at a library in a small study room. A South Indian immigrant who had been in the US for about 2.5 years, Sindu arrived on time and came to the little room well prepared with the three images that represent her conceptualization of the phenomenon "hope," as I had requested. She understood that these could be digital or hard copy, personal or stock images, or anything else that came to mind for her when she considered the idea of hope. Sindu expressed her enjoyment of this request and immediately brought out her first image: an 8 x 10 inch print of her main deity, Ganesh. Often worshipped as the one who removes obstacles or the God of beginnings, Ganesh is worshipped very broadly in her hometown, across India and beyond. She eagerly launched into her connection with Ganesh by explaining that he was more than just a family God to her. She said she enjoyed a sense of permanency in him, and a sense that he would "always have her back." His temple was a place that felt very comforting to her in India before she moved to the States.

Building on this idea, Sindu brought out her second image which was a framed photograph of her own hands, covered in an elaborate *mehndi*, or henna-stained design. Visibly still enjoying the photo every time she looked at it, Sindu expressed that this

photo, taken on her wedding day, represented not only her hope for the future, but the beautiful answer to prayer that came to fruition that day. Sindu had been expected to have an arranged marriage. When she found herself in love with a young man who desired to marry her, Sindu resolved to spend one day seeking Ganesh's help at his temple while the beloved man visited her parents to explain their desire for marriage. All went very smoothly, and the marriage proposal was accepted. The bangles worn at her wedding were also depicted in the photo, bangles that were given from both her family and her husband's relatives. The coming together of these bangles along with the intricate beauty of the mehndi on the photo was a symbol for Sindu of Ganesh's miraculous goodness in helping bring this union about in harmony.

There was a sense about Sindu, as she shared both stories about Ganesh and her marriage that perhaps she had not thought of them as being symbols of hope for her until the interview. She seemed pleased to interweave her faith and her practical life, her past and her future, her former and current residence in this way, as if piecing together parts of her own story right before my eyes and enjoying its cohesiveness. Clifford and Marcus write of the importance of letting the context unfold the story through 'cooperative story making', as I believed it unfolded for Sindu during our interview:

> We better understand the ethnographic context as one of cooperative story making, that, in one of its ideal forms would result in a polyphonic text, none of whose participants would have the final word in the form of a framing story or encompassing synthesis—a discourse on the discourse. [1]

[1] James Clifford, Marcus, George E, and School of American Research. *Writing Culture : The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. (Berkeley: U of California, 1986), 126.

Through selecting photos that captured the journey towards marriage including the doubts, fears and the act of retreating to the temple that were inherent in the process, Sindu came to realize that symbols of her wedding had become symbols of hope for her.

Finally, Sindu pulled out a small, white piece of paper on which was printed some writing by a child. The note was one that had obviously been folded and unfolded many times. She explained that she had always been constantly available to her two young daughters. Her husband traveled much and they were accustomed to his absence, but the girls expected that their mother should never be away from them. When it became necessary one weekend for her to travel away from home, her oldest daughter, about 9 years old at the time, wrote her the note she had brought. When she received the note initially, Sindu had anticipated that it might contain a request for a gift or the admonition to return quickly, or perhaps some sentiments of her daughter's fear about her absence. Instead, the note merely communicated that her daughter wished Sindu would take care to be safe and wished her a pleasant trip. The maturity and selfless nature of these words deeply pleased Sindu. She admitted that one of her highest hopes in raising her girls was to produce individuals who can look to the needs of others as well as themselves, to think beyond what they want and to care about the desires of others. This note demonstrated to Sindu that their oldest was already showing evidence of this kind of maturity. The process of hope for Sindu entailed reflecting upon and sharing the joy-filled reminder that the journey towards one of her most deeply held desires, the maturity and selflessness of her children, was well underway. Sindu shared that no other word was more important to her than 'hope,' and that is why she agreed to meet for the interview. Both the enjoyment

she demonstrated during her reflective, intentional sharing about hope and her final statement about hope being important were initial indicators that researching the meaning and function of hope within the Hindu and Christian Indian diaspora in Chicago would yield new and relevant insights about the population.

Interview # 2: "Rupa"

Next, I asked an acquaintance, whom I will call "Rupa," to be a participant. Rupa had been in the States for about 15 years. Before then, she had been raised in Mumbai. We initially met when our children were both participating in an extracurricular club. Rupa is friendly and admittedly lonely as her husband travels very often and has to work long hours even when at home. Her daughter went to live in the Middle East with her husband's relatives a few months prior to our meeting. She is left at home most days and nights with her son, who enjoys spending time outside with the neighbors or playing video games. When she came to my house for the interview, she had just returned from visiting Dubai with her husband and son.

We sat at a table in an office in my home. She did not come prepared with images as we had previously discussed but was comfortable talking spontaneously, and searched for images on her phone as we talked. She began by showing me images of many Hindu deities that she regularly uploads from a website ushering her through daily mantras for worship. She immediately asked me, "Is this what you want? Should I send you these?" I asked her if these were the images of hope that she wanted to share. Rupa replied negatively, and continued to scroll until she found photos of her trip to Dubai. Since our initial meeting, Rupa had enjoyed answering questions about life in India and her Hindu

faith tradition. Perhaps she may have assumed I wanted her images of hope to reflect those areas of her life about which I had already demonstrated interest. Or perhaps she may have desired to portray a version of herself that complied with orientalist expectations similar to the way some authors and publishers have been accused of propagating orientalist agendas to boost political agendas or increase sales,[2] though I am not exactly sure what would have been gained in Rupa's case. I did ask her later why she thought I might like her to show me those specific images, but she did not have the time or desire to explain it, merely stating that we would talk about it another time.

Eventually, after finding some professionally shot photos of her extended family, she began to explain to me the names of each person in the photos. Rupa is thrilled with her children. During the interview she explained her special feelings for her oldest, "She was my first…what do you say that word…feeling proud. First time feeling proud. I achieved something. She was my pride." After explaining how her husband's busyness and her daughter's absence has left her feeling like she herself is fragmented, it was very clear from the photos and her explanations that reuniting her family is a very important hope for Rupa. Because the educational system in the States has not worked well for her daughter, she would like to move her whole family to Dubai, or at least to India where they will be closer to her and to more extended family. This hope for Rupa involved allusion to a literal journey as well as an emotional one. With loss and fragmentation as the backdrop of this hoping process, Rupa had to negotiate the educational needs of her

[2] For example: Carine Bourget. "Complicity with Orientalism in Third-World Women's Writing: Fatima Mernissi's Fictive Memoirs.(Critical Essay)." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2013, pp. 30–49.

daughter and the desire of her husband to work and live in the States. Within the context of the interview, she also had to contend with what she believed were competing vectors of influence, the desire to share her own true answers about hope and her sense for the expected or desired answers I was looking for her to give.

Next, prompted by the image of a health app on her phone, Rupa expressed that "to get in shape" was her second hope, especially with reference to reducing the size of her stomach. With Diabetes pervading her family of origin, she is very concerned about her health and taking the steps necessary to thwart the chances of suffering the same fate. Both her parents and her brother are Diabetic. She shared with sadness,

> And my brother…feel pity on him. When he came over, my dad only paid for his first semester. Then afterwards, he worked hard. Hardly did he get sleep …hardly one or two hours of sleep. He had to go to 7/11 to work and study in college also to pay for his college fees. And in this process, he got Diabetes.

I found it interesting that Rupa's sharing was not predetermined but very much in flux according to spontaneous responses generated by random images that she noticed on her phone, even if those images actually had different meanings for her in a different context. Tim Ingold describes the difference between a view of "objects" that have one fully describable, final form that can be discerned by the researcher, and a view of "things" that are reinterpreted over time and place, the meaning always being dissolved and reformulated. This view of things prompts the researcher to continue to ask what the thing is in this moment, in this context, for this person. "In a world of materials," he states, "nothing is ever finished: everything may be something, but being something is

always on the way to becoming something else."[3] For Rupa, then, the interpretation of the images on her phone changed in the context of my asking her about hope. Some became symbols directly of things hoped for, and some just prompted her toward broader ideas of hope. After talking about health, she put her phone down, no longer utilizing images. Her use of spontaneous, digital images was somewhat unique in the interviews, though many others used digital images or shared spontaneous mental images. The extracting of specific meanings of hope from objects that otherwise have a different purpose was also found in other interviews. These also demonstrated Ingold's view of "things."

Beyond her health and uniting her family, Rupa said she wants a "peaceful life," but did not explain further what that means. She seemed to be concluding her ideas about hope. I asked if there were other words or concepts that captured her interest, in an effort to verify that hope was a relevant phenomenon within the population, or if I would be directed elsewhere. Immediately, she said "patience" because "when you have a hope, you have to have patience". She continued,

> …sometimes it's just…you have to accept it. A lot of bad things and good things happen. So some days are bad and some days are very bad. Bad events happen in your life…You have to accept it and work on how to make your life better…You have to be calmer and pray every day and think about a beautiful life. Always be positive and teach your kids positive.

Rather than replacing hope with another concept, Rupa linked hope with patience, explaining that patience is necessitated by hope. Her answers are particularly poignant given the losses she has had to bear. I had known that Rupa was taking classes to finish

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[3] Tim Ingold. *Redrawing Anthropology : Materials, Movements, Lines*, 3.

her high school education. What I had not known was the reason she quit High School in India before getting married. After stating that patience is necessary for hope, she began to share openly that the reason she quit school was due to the difficulty she was having in a few subjects. Her family had arranged for her to study with a tutor who met with her regularly. In those regular meetings, the tutor sexually abused Rupa. When she terminated the tutoring, Rupa felt so defeated and shamed that she could not return to school. For Rupa, hoping with patience means a deep commitment to pressing on despite much loss and pain. I began to see my acquaintance not just as the friendly and slightly lonely woman I met at a kids' club, but also as a very determined solider who fought hard to raise her kids with positivity rather than dwelling on the losses and setbacks of the past.

Interview #3: "Thomas"

In one of the Christian churches I visited regularly as part of the study, I met a man that I will call "Thomas." Though his given name is recognizable to most as a Christian name, his surname distinctly reflects the Hindu heritage of his father's ancestry. Thomas is a tall, thin man in his early 70's. Retired from work, he invests his time in the church and in private study, as well as helping his grown children raise his grandchildren living nearby. On one of my earliest visits to the church where I met him, Thomas approached me with several suggestions about how I might further my research, offering resources and a means to connect me with others strategically for interviews. Though he answered spontaneous questions I had at the church, I also arranged to interview him formally with

images about his own hopes to aid in my initial conceptual formulation about the how the word hope was used and understood by individuals in the diaspora community.

Though I had asked for him to think about hope and how he might represent it with three images before the interview, the use of images was not a confortable prompt or medium for Thomas. He had reflected upon what he wanted to share, and described his understanding of hope that comes from assurance in the Christian tradition by contrasting it with the means by which one can hope for salvation in the Vaishnavite tradition. He shared,

> Okay, let me start from a friend of mine. I have very good Hindu friends. Some are very Orthodox. We are very close. They are family friend. In Hinduism, different sects have different sets of beliefs. This one is called the Vaishnavites. They worship Vishnu. He was saying, at that time, that he has to visit 106 places of pilgrimage all over India. He had already visited 105. Actually, they have to visit 108, but on this side of heaven, you can only visit 106. Then after you die, if Vishnu is pleased with you, he will take you to 107 and 108. Then only you can enter Vaikuntha, their heaven. Okay? It's something like a Calvinist. For them, the Vaishnavites…but the Shaivite belief is different. So..and I was thinking, I didn't want to come on strong. I had been praying about it. So I want to share about our faith, how we are so sure not because of anything we had done, but because Almighty God himself has done it and we are given that assurance. Okay? So his faith comes to my mind. If somebody can go to heaven based on works, he will be in the front of the line, including forgiving people who have offended him and things like that. Still, he is not sure, because it is based on works. He says that only after his death, if Vishnu is pleased with him…that is very arbitrary.

For Thomas, hope is very linked with logical assessments of propositional faith. I am uncertain if Thomas' father's family were Vaishnavites, but unlike most Christian interlocutors in this study, he and his wife have many longstanding relationships with Hindu friends, many whom are Vaishnavites. They engage with their friends in discussions about faith regularly. Thomas' hope here demonstrates what many other Christians in the diaspora reference throughout this work: hope as it relates with specific beliefs, and the desire to share those beliefs, and hope, with others.

He continued by suggesting that one manifestation of belief in Christ is that hope stands in times of death and loss,

> The second thing is, also, our hope comes to mind during certain circumstances…y'know one of the very important things..the death of a dear one. Before when I was a young boy, we would go to the cemetery. They would read from the scripture…they would say, "We don't grieve like those without hope." Because we have hope that the loved one, if we know that they have already accepted Christ, we know that we are going to see them and we are going to be with them forever. That is the hope, not only that I'm going to be there, but those whom I have loved, that I'm going to be with them also.

Like others in Christian faith traditions in my study, Thomas seemed both to reference a hope fulfilled and a hope that is still in process. During one visit to the church where I often saw Thomas, I sensed that he was deeply saddened. He explained that he had wished to go to India to see a dying friend, a Hindu, so that he could share about Jesus one final time in an effort to help his friend come to know the hope he had for forgiveness and salvation. However, he was unable to go to India in time. Thomas had just received news that morning that his friend had passed away the day before. He had been found in front of his home temple where he had been worshipping as he died. This news was difficult for Thomas on many levels. Though his own sense of hope for salvation was sure, he still felt the loss of others in this life, particularly if they were not saved according to his theological understanding. He admitted that this was complex and painful, despite his personal hope. I felt honored that Thomas trusted me by sharing this painful loss. The vulnerability and honesty that Thomas demonstrated was displayed repetitively by participants in sharing the complexities and difficulties of hoping. Some really seemed to enjoy using images and symbols, and some, like Thomas, avoided it altogether.

Interview #3: "Shobha"

Months after I met Thomas, I received an email from him explaining that some people in the church were gathering to experience a kind of Hindu-Christian worship that would be led by a friend in his suburban home. He wondered if this might be interesting to me. Excited about what sounded like an unusual opportunity, I gladly attended. After the service, I stayed to share a meal with the others who attended, and there I met a woman I will call "Shobha." She was most likely in her early 60's, and was friendly, intelligent, energetic and intense. She came to speak to me and asked me many questions. At the end, Shobha commented that she had a feeling we would be "soul friends." I was invited by the leaders to attend more worship services whenever I wished, as they were held daily in the city. Shortly afterwards, I visited the Center where they were held, and it was there that Shobha allowed me to interview her.

Originally from Delhi, Shobha has lived a painful and challenging life one might not assume upon meeting her because of her pep and cheerful presentation. She was raised as a Hindu, the only daughter to her parents. Though she referenced that her childhood involved a lot of pain, she did not elaborate on what she had suffered. Though Shobha did not bring physical images to share, she referenced mental images of faith as symbols that gave her hope. She launched into the first description without hesitation:

> First image that I think of is the cross, because coming from the background that I did, that is what has given me hope for my life. Every time I look at the cross, I think of Lord Jesus. So that is my hope. Everything that I am today is because of him. It's everything rolled into one. If there would be no cross, there would be no hope for me. It's future oriented in the sense that, coming from a Hindu background, one of my biggest problems that I had with Hinduism was the cycle of rebirth, and not knowing when my good deeds would be good enough for me not to be born again. This life was so hard for me when I

> was growing up that I did not want to have another life. One of the questions that I had was, who is going to rescue me so that the cycle is ended? Because, obviously, when you are born into the Hindu faith, that is what you believe, what you are taught…that you are born again and again and again, till your karma is fulfilled. And then you become one with God, the Creator God. And I have that hope in Christ, that once I die, this is it! So no more suffering, no more pain, no more sadness. I don't have to take another birth and go through the same pain in life, because in life, there will be pain, regardless.

In this way, Shobha's description echoes Davies' statement, "Hope offers a transcending of fear. It acknowledges the hardships and difficulties of life but does not remain bound by them. It brings a new time perspective to people, showing that tomorrow will be better than today."[4] In contrast to Rupa who wanted more patience to deal with pain, Shobha found that pain to be a launching stimulus to look for that cord of hope, Jesus. It is a cord that seems to hold for Shobha. She continued, "I've tested him and tried him, and found him so faithful in so many areas. There are no doubts in my mind. There used to be, but not anymore."

I did not realize at that moment, as we sat in the back room of the Community Center that was founded to serve the South Asians in the area that she was actually the person who founded it over twenty years ago. Nor did I realize then that she led a ministry befriending and offering help to girls caught in trafficking rings in the city. In light of this, she offered her second idea of what hope means to her,

> …The hope that Christ gave me to be used as his instrument of hope in other people's life. The same thing that is available to me is available to everyone. But again, how will a person follow unless he knows? Someone has to tell them. What a privilege that he uses me. It makes me feel like family, like he cares, like I have worth.

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[4] Douglas Davies. *Emotion, Identity, and Religion*, 192.

This catalyzing effect demonstrates again that hope is both something to be grasped in the present and also something that sets us in motion toward the future. Though it seems to offer certainty and safety, at the same time, it propels the holder into a space of unrealized potential for themselves or for others. Shobha's description demonstrates the issues of temporality and passivity v. agency that arise through many of the accounts of hope in this study.

These four interviews represent some themes that arose in the course of an initial photo-interview exercise. They were chosen to offer a sample of the broader range, and are placed in the beginning of this chapter both to demonstrate my early desire to begin to define the word and meaning of "hope" according to that of the population studied, and to offer some initial ideas by which the remainder of the thesis can be understood, before launching into the full ethnographic accounts in Chapters Four through Six.

Aim of Study

This research explores experiences of hope as experienced and explained by the Hindu and Christian Indians in the US city of Chicago using participant observation and interviews over the 18-month period between June 2015 and December 2016. It aims to further South Asian diaspora research with regard to Indian immigrants in the US, specifically the metropolitan Chicago area. Using questions about hope as a launching

place, it seeks to understand more about the desires, commitments, longings and obstacles facing Asian Indians in the context of Chicagoland.[5]

Research on Indian diaspora in the US and even in Chicago is available with regard to specific issues such as economic effects of the diaspora, media and music in the diaspora and other important aspects of the diasporic influence and experience. However, hope in the diaspora has not been researched directly. Further, though hope has been researched across disciplines with many theories offered, current debates remain regarding the nature of function of hope, as I will review more specifically in Chapter Two. By examining hope in the Indian diaspora, I am able to offer empirical examples of hope that can speak to these debates, while furthering the data on the Indian diaspora in an area that has not been researched.

Main Argument

I suggest this work furthers current research through the ethnographic accounts herein by illustrating hope lived in a present population of Indian diaspora in the US. More specifically, this work furthers our understanding of the Indian diaspora by addressing 1) a need for more data on the role of women in transmitting culture and faith, 2) a lack of data on South Asian Christianity in the diaspora in the US, and 3) the close attention needed to movements and motivations in the lives of those in the diaspora which has

[5] "Chicagoland" is an expression used by those residing in Chicago and surrounding area referring to both the city and surrounding suburbs. Rangaswamy suggests that Indians returning to India name "Chicago" as their new place of residence even if they live in surrounding suburbs, but when speaking to others in Chicago, residents of Chicago refer to the whole metropolitan area as "Chicagoland." (Rangaswamy, Padma. *Namasté America: Indian Immigrants in an American Metropolis*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000. P. 77)

been called for in recent literature on South Asian diaspora, especially with regard to middle class members.[6]

Through this research, I argue that three themes, or categories of hope were demonstrated in the South Asian Indian diaspora in the metropolitan Chicago area: the hope to be accepted, the hope to make a contribution and the hope to be true to oneself. Each of these will be illustrated in Chapters Four through Six of the thesis. In all three categories, the process of hoping required the individuals and groups to negotiate a host of influences both positive and negative. Rather than hope being a force that opposes fear or despair, some of those negative experiences seemed enveloped in the hoping process. As individuals and groups reflected upon the process of hoping, it became clear that experiences of emotional "highs" and lows," and forward movement toward desires, as well as set backs, were all a part of one process called hope. In fact, hope did not seem to be hope without apparent losses or back steps at times. Those hoping were required to maintain the balance of life while the past, present and future converged, and while the negative emotions such as fear and despair challenged positive longings such as a sense of connection to others, to God and even to themselves.

In reflecting upon this process of keeping balance, the members of the diaspora revealed life issues and topics that are relevant for diaspora discourse in areas such as family, religion, health and ethnicity negotiation. Through the process of hoping in these areas, I suggest that the act of hoping for many in the study was particularly difficult and risky.

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[6] Judith Brown. *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora; New Approaches to Asian History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3.

Those who undertook it had to be willing to withstand many influences that were often at odds with one another. An ethnographic approach to the phenomenon of hope particularly accessed data from contexts where these subtle nuances of hope have manifest.

Limitations of the Scope of this Research

The data resulting from this research describes specific people experiencing a human phenomenon in a specific location during a specific period in history. I am not suggesting that these descriptions provide universal definitions of hope, nor are they emblematic descriptions of hope experienced by everyone within this population.[7] Further, I am not arguing that these descriptions, definitions and experiences are unique to this population. Rather, the resulting accounts that I offer from this research provide a window into previously unexplored perspectives of how hope can function in some cases and what it says about the life experiences of some of the Hindu and Christian Indians in Chicago in the given time frame. The data is relevant and significant in that it offers empirical results to a discourse on hope that has been heavily weighted on the theoretical. Further, this study offers phenomenological considerations to the discourse on South Asian diaspora that has been growing, but still requiring research in many areas. As stated earlier, Chapter Three will provide an overview on literature pertinent to those in the Indian diaspora in Chicago.

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[7] In using the singular, I am referring to the combined groups of immigrant Indians in Chicago. While this is not, to be sure, a homogenous group, I keep the word in the singular for ease of communication. Please note that there are many subgroups with distinctions and many individual differences that are included, even within religious traditions.

Content Overview

Moving forward, the following material has been divided into five chapters and a conclusion. Chapter Two entails a description of the methods that I used and the benefits of those methods for the research. I will then offer a conceptual outline of the theory and working definition of hope that was used throughout the study, and describe how these relate with recent debates in scholarship on hope from within psychology and anthropology. Finally, I will highlight key issues regarding hope in the diaspora that will be demonstrated through the ethnographic accounts.

Chapter Three begins by defining what is meant by some key terms, such as "Indian" and "diaspora." After suggesting that migration is a growing and critical phenomenon that necessitates further research, I will provide an overview of literature on South Asian diaspora, one of the largest migrant groups today. I will then consider various influences that play a role in the formation of Indian identity within the diaspora including caste and class issues. Next, I will trace trends in worldwide diaspora in relation to the history and dynamics of Indian migrant groups and within the Chicagoland area itself. I will also briefly describe the research sites and contexts in which I have gathered the data. This chapter aims to provide the historical and evolving social context within which we can understand the ethnographic data that follows in the subsequent chapters, and to demonstrate that there are several areas lacking research that this project claims to address.

The next portion of the thesis, specifically Chapters Four through Six, provides data from the field divided according to three themes. The first of these, Chapter Four, identifies and describes the "Hope to Be Accepted." In this chapter I describe five examples of the hope for acceptance as found in the lives of individuals in the Indian diaspora or the context of communities or groups of those in the diaspora around the Chicago area. The resulting descriptions aim to expatiate the experiences of those in the diaspora as well as to recount the ways in which hope was a journey that necessitated the balancing of many influences both positive and negative.

Next, Chapter Five describes the "Hope to Make a Contribution." Broadly considered, this chapter describes some of the means through which members of the Christian and Hindu Indian diaspora have sought to contribute to the growth and wellbeing of groups or individuals in their family, faith and community. As with Chapter Four, this chapter provides examples from the field entailing manifestations of hope. As descriptions of the hope to make a contribution are offered, obstacles and difficulties are considered along with successes and victories. Hoping for contribution necessitates a similar journey where both enjoyable and painful experiences collide, and where past, present and future all seem to intersect in one time and place that must be negotiated.

Chapter Six provides data on the "Hope to Be True to Ones' Self," or a commitment to experience and express what is most true or authentic in one's life. This chapter is similarly structured with several accounts of individuals and groups whose lives and

situations uniquely demonstrate this hope from within the diaspora. After describing the meaning of the category and limiting its interpretation, I then narrate the accounts and conclude with the parallel suggestion of the hoping process being a journey by which those hoping are in between realities.

In an effort to honor the individuality of those described and the uniqueness of the processes of hoping in any given situation, I acknowledge that the three hope themes are intentionally broad. In delineating these porous themes, I was able to include a variety of critical life stages, experiences and topics that are significant for South Asian diaspora research and proved rich fields for examining hope. These included topics such as marriage, the role of women in transmitting culture and religion, fertility/child-rearing, the negotiations of identity and faith, multi-generational commitments of immigrants, ritual performance, health, loneliness, depression and suicide, experiences of prejudice and rejection, the empowerment of women and communities rallying for change, cultural integration, descriptions of middle class diaspora experiences, and much needed data on Christians in the Indian diaspora. Some of the stories related to these topics could have fit in more than one category of hoping, and they are not necessarily unique to the Indian diaspora. Still, they provide revealing stories of individuals and groups reflecting on hope that yield uniquely significant data on the population as well as on the phenomenon of hope. As such, they offer a structure by which we can categorize and even compare the reflections and experiences of hope, allowing for the resulting contributive arguments on hope in the Indian Diaspora.

Chapter Seven is the conclusion of the thesis. Here I explore the contribution made from my research to scholarship on the Indian diaspora especially with regard to their experiences of hope. I reiterate that the act of hoping in their lives can be seen as the confluence of vectors that influence the individual or group including thoughts and emotions, messages from the past, present or future, disappointments and successes, loss and attainments, all vying for position within the hoping individual or group at a particular time and place. I then discuss several implications for the research beginning with a discussion about the sequential nature of the three hopes as they related with Erikson's eight life stages. Next, I compare some themes across religious groups and highlight several key issues such as race, ethnicity and religious expression with which members of the Indian diaspora in Chicago must contend in order to hope.

CHAPTER TWO: Methods, Theory and Issues Regarding Hope in the Indian Hindu and Christian Diaspora in Chicago

The purpose of Chapter Two is to provide a description of the methods used and the theory that arose throughout the course of this research, as well as to highlight important issues regarding hope in the diaspora. After providing more data from photo-elicitation interviews and participant observation selected, I will delineate the conceptual model of hope that arose from the data and describe the manner in which it relates with the current debates on hope in the literature, especially with regard to current studies in psychology and anthropology. I will then outline key issues that arose from the research pertaining to hope in this diasporic context that will be illustrated in the ethnographic accounts in Chapters Four through Six.

Methods Employed: Photo Elicitation Interviews and Participant Observation

Visual Methods Overview

The use of visual methods in ethnography has vacillated over the decades, bringing us to the most present reemergence of these methods in alternative ways from the past, with an

emphasis on the possibility of a collaborative discourse emerging as a result.[8] Images are currently respected as promoters of meaning-making dialogue, used to generate a symbiotic exchange of ideas by triggering responses from one participant that in turn triggers further responses from the researcher. Meaning emerges as this exchange, which is the desired outcome of the research, takes place. The content of the materials is viewed as in flux, meaning that it can be elaborated upon or passed over by the participants as they generate this collaborative discourse, rather than being gathered and analyzed as the outcome of the research itself.[9] These visuals can add a dimension of depth to the discourse as they bring to mind details that might have otherwise evaded the participants' memories. In *Visual Methods in Social Research*, Banks writes that utilizing photo elicitation can help "unleash a flood of detail" to participants' vague memories, which can lend focus to the discourse.[10]

Realizing that I had come to my field work not only with preconceived ideas about the word and phenomenon of hope in general, but also about the population of Indian diaspora and their valuing of this concept, I wanted to start to clarify meanings and context before participant observation with the diaspora members began, so that I could ensure that even the writing of my first notes was as informed as possible. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw comment, "All too frequently, ethnographic field notes fail to attend

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[8] Jonathan Marion and Jerome Crowder. *Visual Research: a Concise Introduction to Thinking Visually*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
Marcus Banks and Jay Ruby. *Made to Be Seen*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
Sarah Pink. *The Future of Visual Anthropology : Engaging the Senses*. (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006).

[9] Tim Ingold. *Redrawing Anthropology : Materials, Movements, Lines*. (Farnham, Surrey, England Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 53.

[10] Marcus Banks. *Visual Methods in Social Research*. (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 88.

consistently to members' meaning, instead importing outside or exogenous categories and meanings. Imposition of outside categories produces field note descriptions that fail to appreciate local meanings and concerns."[11]

Photo-Elicitation Interviews

Hence, I chose to use photo-elicitation interviews very early in the research to provide an orientation for the meaning of the word "hope" according to the participants. Sharing physical, digital and mental or emotional images such as "the cross," or "the moment my commuter train doors open on my way home with shreds of daylight still lingering for the first time that spring," interlocutors initially unveiled an understanding of hope that guided and facilitated my continuing research. Geertz suggests, "A good interpretation of anything—a poem, a person, a history, a ritual, an institution, a society—takes us into the heart of that which it is the interpretation."[12] In seeking to understand the experience of hope for the Indian Hindu and Christian diaspora in Chicago, it was necessary to expose myself to cultural ideas about hope to the furthest extent possible early on, orienting myself to definitions, usages, experiences and events that can describe, trigger or possibly manifest "hope." Because language usage can vary from person to person, even with definitions in place to level discrepancies as much as possible, it can become labyrinthine navigating through nuances and presuppositions at times to arrive at any sense of what the "other" might be experiencing in any given phenomenon expressed in language. I wanted the participants to represent their ideas of hope without qualifying any

[11] Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 131.
[12] Clifford Geertz. *The Interpretation of Cultures : Selected Essays*. *2000 ed.* (New York: Basic, 2000), 18.

predetermined meaning of the word or concept. Thus, I chose to use a visual method to enhance my understanding of language and conceptual understanding as an initial unveiling of the phenomenon of hope with nineteen interlocutors.

I began my project by interviewing 19 people of Indian descent in the Chicagoland area, utilizing photo-elicitation to attempt a reorientation of my own conceptions into greater alignment with those I wished to study. Of the 19 interviewed, 8 were Hindu, 10 were Christian and 1 was Muslim. One participant was under 25 years of age, 13 participants were between 25 and 50 years, and 5 were older than 50. They ranged in time of living in the States from 1 month to 47 years. 2 were students, 5 were retired and the rest were working professionally, or staying at home with their children. Most came from south India, though 4 came from either the north or moved around from state to state. 4 were men and 15 were women. All spoke English as well as a number of other languages.

I requested that each participant bring 3 pre-selected images that represented 'hope' (however they understood that term) and describe these images to me for 15-20 minutes at a convenient place and time. Finding participants proved more complex than I had anticipated. A library, which is located in an area populated by a large number of diaspora Indians, allows advertising for many local events to be hung in a central location. I advertised there as well as at several Indian grocery stores that have bulletin boards available for advertising, usually filled with requests for nannies, posters of upcoming Indian musicians or dances, or other relevant materials that may be of interest to the typical patrons. The advertisement described the purpose of the study, the procedural

details of the interviews, and my contact information. No one responded to these advertisements. Instead, participants came from many different connections such as churches, schools, clubs, and stores where I had met people randomly, as well as some from people I had known previously. In Chapter One, I began by sharing four examples of these interviews demonstrating word choices and general themes of the meaning of hope for the participants in my study. Throughout the ethnography, I will describe some more of the images that were brought by various interviewees as they relate with the topics throughout.

Much more could be added about the photos and the descriptions from the interviews provided. They were rich, beautiful windows into many aspects of experience and emotion that taught me much about the kinds of things that deeply mattered to the populations with whom I would be spending the remainder of the 18 months. The exercise was an effort to endow an otherwise abstract concept with material substance, and to provide an arena in which the word and concept used by members of the diaspora could be conjured and analyzed without predetermined definitions or constraints. There were graphics, symbols, photos and word pictures. Themes of spaces in which pain was acknowledged, fears were real and past influences still had a profound presence were shared, along with the desire and intention of moving away from those things in the future. Many subtle allusions were made to the need for patience, perseverance, strength and courage in the process of hoping. In almost every case, there was an inner dialogue that demonstrated the negotiations that took place between these intersecting vectors, and

there seemed to be a kind of recognition that the process was long and messy but necessary, and ultimately good.

Participant Observation

Conducting ethnographic research typically entails observing people over longer periods of time within their present contexts for the purpose of providing bridges that "allow the reading public to cross over to new understandings" of others and themselves.[13] Benson Saler refers to ethnographers as "'bridge builders' charged with the task of facilitating a 'crossing' into the sensibilities and sensitivities of the others."[14] Being directly involved with the populations informing the study is a key commitment of ethnographers.[15] Thus, I spent 18 month living in a part of the Chicagoland area, intentionally visiting stores, events, schools and clubs that were organized, hosted and attended by the Indian diaspora in Chicago, all of whom were in the middle or upper middle class.[16] Though there are Indian Sikhs, Jains and Muslims in the Chicago diaspora as well, I almost exclusively encountered Indian Hindus and Indian Christians because they were most populous in the specific suburbs, groups and places of worship where I concentrated my study.[17]

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[13] *Ibid*.
[14] *Ibid.,209*.
[15] Stephen Schensul, Jean Schensul, and Margaret Le Compte. *Initiating Ethnographic Research: A Mixed Methods Approach*. Ethnographer's Toolkit; Book 2. (Lanham, MD: AltaMira, 2013), 2.
[16] According to Pew Research, middle class households are "those with an income that is 67% to 200% (two-thirds to double) of the overall median household income, after incomes have been adjusted for household size." Generally, an income of 50-100,000USD annual income is considered middle class.
[17] The main Sikh and Jain temples were over an hour from the parts of Chicago where I was located during the study. Though I did meet one Jain and a few Sikhs, those located in the areas were I was located almost exclusively were Hindu and Christian. In addition, these two groups were very accessible to me and welcomed my research. These connections made the limitation of the study to these two groups easy and logical.

Observation is often coupled with participation in the research setting. Michael Jackson explains that participating bodily helps the researcher to grasp how an activity is experienced by those being studied, "eating just as locals eat, working at the pace that locals work, and going along with local priorities may carry one into an understanding that could not be attained through questioning, interviewing, or conceptual guesswork alone."[18] Jackson suggests that through observation and participation together, the researcher is able to understand local praxis by literally inhabiting the world of the other.[19]Consequently, participant observation was chosen to address the cultural, religious, historical and geo-political context of the research. I was not attempting to be the voice of informants involved. Rather, by recognizing the import of those contextual realities, descriptions of lived moments or structures could be more appropriately situated culturally, socially, historically and with regard to religion.

Methodologically, I was both an insider and an outsider. Being a native of Chicagoland and using my mother tongue, English, to conduct the study, I was considered an "insider." Also, with regard to those in the Christian tradition, I was considered an insider, as well. Not being of Indian heritage or ethnicity, and being outside of the Hindu faith tradition, I was also considered an "outsider." However, having lived in India and often being told that I seemed to know quite a bit more about Indian history and culture than the average Chicago dweller outside of the diaspora, I was ultimately considered a hybrid. Being outside, inside and a hybrid offered various strengths and weaknesses at times. In a study highlighting complexities of insider perspectives in research, Finefter-

[18] Michale Jackson. *Between One and One Another*. (Berkeley: U of California, 2012), 171.
[19] *Ibid.*,170-1.

Rosenbluh suggests that there are complexities and ethical concerns that arise from being an insider.[20] As methodological enhancement, she suggests that social perspective taking can offset ethical quandaries and perspective issues. She states,

> It was clear to me that, while as an insider I may have had access to a particular kind of understanding of the participants' experience, this access would not automatically grant me special authority to interpret those experiences. Also, while I recognized the limited understanding that the outsider may have acquired, it was clear to me that it would not necessarily follow that outsiders cannot develop and present an understanding, or, that such an understanding is valueless.[21]

She quotes Gehlbach's description of social perspective taking as a "multidimensional aptitude that incorporates the ability to understand others accurately."[22] Finefter-Rosenbluh clarifies that social perspective taking involves stepping outside of one's own psychological viewpoints in realization that another's perspective might be completely different from what one might assume. This perspective taking is added to reflexive acknowledgement that one's presence might alter results, or that one might be reacting to data in a way that might skew results. As both an outsider and an insider, I found myself considering psychological complexities consistent with Finefter-Rosenbluh's methodological suggestion. This process facilitated my ability to participate in the research both as an insider and outsider at times, honoring both the sameness and otherness without assumptions or strong reactions.

It is through this participatory process that we can come to understand social worlds, "drawing upon the theoretical traditions of symbolic interaction and

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[20] Finefter-Rosenbluh, Ilana. "Incorporating Perspective Taking in Reflexivity." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16, no. 1 (2017): 1-11.
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] Hunter Gehlbach. "A New Perspective on Perspective Taking: A Multidimensional Approach to Conceptualizing an Aptitude." 16, no. 3 (2004): 207-234.

ethnomethodology."[23] Symbols "open" the world and transmute experience into metaphysical comprehension of the world.[24] Hence, qualitative methods examining symbolic interactions are critical to the process of understanding a phenomenon of a population as a window into the means by which metaphysical conceptions are created and maintained. Here, I recall Geertz's two-stage operation in the anthropology of religion: "first an analysis of the system of meanings embodied in the symbols which make up the religion proper, and second, the relating of these systems to social-structure and psychological processes."[25] The resulting ethnography, then, is the product of the participant observation conducted as my chosen method for relating these systems. Geertz refers to Gilbert Ryle's term, "thick description" in differentiating between how one records the movement of an eye as a wink or a twitch. "Doing ethnography," he writes, "is establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on. But it is not these things, techniques and procedures that define the enterprise. What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in, to borrow from Gilbert, Ryle, 'thick description.'"[26]

I spent the next 18 months in three "settings" doing participant-observation and interviews, attempting to capture thick descriptions in my notes with each encounter. This

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[23] Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. *Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2.
[24] Mircea Eliade, and Willard Trask. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. 1st American Ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 211.
[25] Clifford Geertz, and American Council of Learned Societies. *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. 3rd ed. (New York: Basic, 2000), 125.
[26] Geertz. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, 6.

entailed visiting religious sites such as Indian Christian churches and Hindu temples around Chicagoland, spending time in homes for social or religious events, eating meals and drinking chai, and having spontaneous conversations in public settings such as local clubs, camps and classes where parents stood waiting for their children. I formally interviewed leaders in some settings, and offered to hold some events by local Indian groups in my own home. I danced, walked, studied Hindi and attended some personal celebrations. Through these specific activities, to borrow from Stoller's language of Songhay griots, as I took part in these social activities, I was "eaten" or consumed by a new awareness of how hope effects the lives of the Indian diaspora that I was researching. He writes, "For scholars, this suggests acknowledging an embodied implication in our representations through (1) a critical awareness of the senses; (2) an attentiveness to voice; and (3) a recognition of the increasing political implications of our works—a sensual scholarship."[27]

In addition to the reasoning listed thus far, I also chose participant observation because it was an opportunity to discern meaning together with the participants in the study. Through my presence and the participants' awareness that I was interested in studying their views and experiences of hope, the motivation for behaviors observed and in which I often participated as it related to hope was often addressed. Even for those performing routine activities, discussions about why these activities were chosen became common. Jackson writes, "Fieldwork is a way of sounding the other out—giving him or her a hearing, getting a sense of the world from his or her point of view. By extension, sound

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[27] Paul Stoller. *Sensuous Scholarship*. (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania, 1997) 34.

writing echoes the events, encounters, and conversations that make up our everyday life in another society, bringing them back to life on the printed page while at the same time offering our reflections on them."[28] The 18 months I spent with the communities that were a part of my research afforded me chances to write, analyze and then check back with my informants, questioning whether or not I was capturing meanings they had conveyed, and whether I understood symbolic action similarly to how those symbolic actions brought meaning to themselves. For example, in one setting, I was granted the opportunity to discuss the *puja*, or worship, I regularly observed, inquiring about meanings of the conch shell that was blown, the color of the tapestries involved, how power differentials were handled in the group leadership, and more. Fiona Bowie describes the symbolic world in which humans live, stating, "symbols are cultural constructs and do not have universally recognized meanings."[29] Bowie describes the different meanings a ring can symbolize, first to a westerner who connects the ring's shape to the idea of eternal commitment. She then compares that meaning with that of women in Cameroon, many who conceptually understand rings to symbolize slavery. "Cultures also take strong hints from biological and psychological clues," she continues, "We need to remain sensitive to the type of symbol we are dealing with, whether it is personal or collective, individually motivated or obligatory, whether or not it is ritualized, and whether it is passively received or actively performed."[30] Given the very intentional choice of symbols utilized in the puja services mentioned, the conversations I was afforded clarified many meanings and the motivations behind their usage. All of these

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[28] Michael Jackson. *Between One and One Another*. (University of California Press, 2012), 174.
[29] Fiona Bowie. *The Anthropology of Religion : An Introduction*. 2nd ed. (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2006), 57.
[30] *Ibid*.

conversations were recorded in my notes and eventually informed the writing of the research.

One particularly rewarding opportunity that came about through this method was the chance to confidentially discuss thoughts about issues that arose within Christian contexts while I was with the Hindu participants, or vice versa. This yielded data that emerged from considering issues that can sometimes be viewed quite differently from one group to another. One example of this exchange across faith is in Chapter Six. There I discuss varying views of marriage lasting beyond this life with participants in both faith traditions, and the possible connections those views may have upon levels of attachment in marriage.

The Selection of Indian Diaspora as a Population

The presence of a rapidly increasing, significantly large Indian diaspora population in the metropolitan Chicago area, necessitates continuing research. That reality, in conjunction with my own familiarity and affinity for those from India since the time of my having lived there previously, suggested that a project exploring expressions of hope in the Hindu and Christian Indian diaspora would be a significantly contributive endeavor.[31]

Research on South Asian Indian Diaspora has been plentiful, and much knowledge about this population has already been accumulated. Diaspora literature has been evolving and

[31] Due to previous exposure to the Indian Diaspora in Chicago where I lived for 10 years prior to this research, I was already quite certain that hope would be a significant topic. Though the contents of the conversations and observations in this analysis were derived from the specific period of June 2015 through December 2016, the relationships sometimes commenced years before that period. This informs the analysis by providing an expanded trajectory of contextual understanding.

expanding extensively in the past several decades especially. In Chapter Three, I will provide more historical and social background of this population, including a literature review regarding relevant issues pertaining to this population in Chicago. Consequently, I needed to consider whether researching hope in the Indian Diaspora in Chicago could offer new and significant data. Here, I acknowledge my position by referencing the distinction between knowledge and wisdom that is set forth by Tim Ingold in his chapter "On Taking Others Seriously."[32] After stating that the world is "not the object of study but its milieu," he continues on by making the distinction:

> We often speak of arming ourselves with knowledge, or of using it to shore up our defenses so that we can better cope with adversity. It gives us power, control and immunity to attack. But the more we take refuge in the citadels of knowledge, the less attention we pay to what is going on around us. Why bother to attend, we say, when we already know? To be wise, to the contrary, is to venture out into the world and take the risk of exposure to what is going on there. It is to let others into our presence, to pay attention and to care…Knowledge has its challenges, wisdom has its ways, but where the challenges of knowledge close in on their solutions, the ways of wisdom open up to a process of life.[33]

Ingold's chapter continues to suggest that participant observation should be studying *with* people, joining people in the process of their own meaning making and allowing our selves to be the students being educated.[34] This would be the means by which one receives wisdom rather than gaining knowledge ideally. And it was the means by which I also hoped, not to gain just more data about the Indian diaspora in Chicago, but to intentionally place myself under their tutelage, inquiring about hope expressed in their own words, according to their unique experiences and perspectives. Their wisdom about hope is manifest in the narratives within the chapters that follow.

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[32] Tim Ingold. *Anthropology Why It Matters*. (Newark: Polity Press, 2018), 9.
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] *Ibid.,14.*

In the process, I learned much about the interlocutors, which furthers the discourse on Christian and Hindu Indian diaspora in Chicago by virtue of providing stories, pictures and confessions of daily struggles, achievements, concerns, commitments and longings. These add further examples and insight to recent discourse on migrant communities that speak to assimilation issues, identity constructions, negotiations and performance. What we come to understand through the vulnerable reflections about hope by those in the study are particular experiences of humanity in the 18-month window during which the study was conducted. In understanding further, we can access greater empathy, relate despite difference and, ideally, to connect more readily because we can find some sameness in the midst of the otherness of others. That is my own hope, anyway.

The Focus on Hindu and Christian in the Diaspora

At the start of my research, I had a limited exposure to the Indian diaspora in Chicago. Of the 50 or so people with whom I had been acquainted, only about 5 were Christians. I was aware, however, that entire congregations of Indian Christians met regularly within the Chicago area. Of the remaining 45, almost all were Hindu.[35] None of those who were Hindu knew any Indian Christians. Though I knew both Hindu and Christian Indians were a large and growing presence in the area, there seemed to be very little overlap or influence between the groups. This was interesting data, given the direction of recent

[35] Hindus and Christians make up the largest two groups in the Indian diaspora in the US. Though there are Sikhs in Chicago, their numbers are very small by comparison and most live closer to a large Gurdwara in the northwestern suburbs of Chicago. While there are more Muslim than Sikh Indians in the area where my research was conducted, they are still a much smaller population than both Hindus and Christians. Other groups are less than 1% in Chicago. Hence, I chose the two most accessible and numerous groups for my study. I will describe these details in more detail in Chapter Four.

works on comparative religion. For example, after providing a helpful history of comparative religions and a list of possible critiques against it, Corinne Dempsey offers a compelling defense of the benefits of comparative religion, when properly contextualized.[36] She suggests that ongoing exchanges are inevitable in the current global community, implying that religion is rarely experienced as something singular or simple.[37] There was a complexity in Chicago between these faith groups that seemed worth investigating. That either the Hindu groups or the Christian groups were not singular or simple was obvious, yet they seemed largely untouched by one another. Because I aimed to get as broad an understanding of the Indian diaspora as I could with regard to experiences and perspectives of hope, and because Christian and Hindu groups were the largest religious groups represented in the local Indian diaspora, it seemed beneficial to include both groups. Comparison was not the intention of this study, as such. If, however, noting similarities and differences between people of differing faiths could bring more fullness to a contextual understanding, it seemed critical to provide data that emerged comparatively. Further, comparative research permits insights into how the differential circumstances of various ethno-religious groups might elicit different forms of hopefulness. As Dempsey stated, "The [comparative] process can also draw attention to ethical concerns and solutions emerging cross-culturally."[38] Hence, I will discuss some issues that were shared by both groups in Chapter Three both for fullness of contextual understanding and to highlight commonalities that might bridge these divergent groups.

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[36]Corinne Dempsey. *Bringing the Sacred down to Earth : Adventures in Comparative Religion*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5-11.
[37] *Ibid., 9.*
[38] *Ibid.,15.*

Challenges in Method

Several methodological challenges occurred throughout the study. These were due to identifying hope in observation, varying reasons for hoping and means of communicating hope between Hindus and Christians, and my own lack of familiarity or knowledge in some cases, or the participants assuming my total familiarity with practices and doctrine in others. In this section, I will describe these challenges and how I worked to overcome them. Charlotte Aull Davies suggests, "The search for a philosophically sound basis for ethnographic research which fully accepts its inherent reflexivity while still maintaining that its products are explanations of an external social reality requires both an ontology that asserts that there is a social world independent of our knowledge of it and an epistemology that argues that it is knowable."[39] The challenges I will mention here reflect this reflexive position while still holding that the social world of the Indian diaspora with regard to hope is, to some extent, knowable. However, these challenges created the need for extra reflection and continual checking and sometimes re-checking with informants about facts, behaviors, symbols and relationships; thus reflexivity did not undermine ontological nor epistemological possibilities. In fact, at times, I believe the challenges that follow enhanced both. Michael Jackson convincingly conveys that instead of assuming that the ways in which we experience and represent the world is as we think it is, we should focus on the lack of fit, the "slippage between our immediate experience

[39] Charlotte Davies, and NetLibrary, Inc. *Reflexive Ethnography : A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. (Taylor & Francis E-Library ed. London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), 18.

and the conceptual forms whereby that experience is mediated."[40] Though this slippage at times forced deeper questioning, it ultimately educed a deeper understanding, and many times, a deeper connection with those whom were questioned.

Identifying Hope in Participant Observation

While the photo-elicitation interviews offered me some initial suggestions regarding locations, events or objects in which I might observe hope, and steered me toward conversations and communities in which I could participate as a means of researching hope, there were still times when I was not exactly certain that I was observing or participating in hope specifically. In these times, there were often opportunities for me to inquire about motivations behind worship, activities, relationships or other actions that clarified how those motivations were related to hope. However, there were also times when I needed to depend upon intuition to understand how hope may or may not be related to given activities or motivations because there were no previous or immediate opportunities to ask and clarify. In those cases, I drew from my previous conversations and connected what was happening with past discussions about choices and actions that might be related. As with any research involving the attempt to understand others deeply, there is a larger margin for error than I wish. Towards that end, I would suggest that what transpired between the participants and myself as we discussed hope before or after participant observation contributed to making and understanding hope between us. We came to discuss what would happen or that which just occurred in the context of my

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[40] Michael Jackson. *Between One and One Another*. (Berkeley: U of California, 2012), 170-1.

constant questions about hope. Consequently, actions, objects and embodied forms that may not have previously been connected with hope suddenly were both for the participants and myself.

Also, researching a phenomenon that does not have a singularly accepted definition across disciplines can create methodological concerns. I wanted to allow a nuanced definition and description of the term to emerge from the diaspora members, and yet had to use the word "hope" to generate the conversations about it. I felt conflicted about defining hope too extensively before my field research, and yet needed to work with a defined concept in order for the data to have coherence. I have described my decision to orient my project with initial photo-elicitation interviews. From these interviews, I was able to get a sense for how the word was used by members of the diaspora in my study, confirmation that hope was an important phenomenon in the lives of the diaspora members, and an initial idea of some specific hopes that offered insights into locations I should visit for participant observation. Thus a common understanding of a general meaning of the word hope was gathered, while hope as a concept remained elastic and elusive so that participants could apply it in varied and nuanced ways.

Concurrent with the interviews, as mentioned earlier, I also researched hope in the literature of several disciplines. Since there is no consistent understanding of the function of hope that exists across disciplines, I did not have to be concerned about this research overshadowing the definitions that emerged from the interviews. The debates that I found in the literature will be delineated in the section to follow. These discussions did not pre-

define the term nor clarify the function of hope, but alerted me to debates that prompted questions I could ask during the participant observation and interviews that followed in the months to come. Consequently, though I did not have an initial definition of hope and was concerned about imposing outside definitions about hope onto my field data, through the photo-elicitation interviews, literature review, and flexible parameters of what hope could mean, I was able to use the word "hope" in meaningful ways that did not limit my ability to research its unique manifestation in the populations I researched due to presumptions about its meaning.

Comparative Nature of Religion

There are many benefits to comparative religious ethnography. However, these benefits do not come without some challenges or limitations. In examining hope lived and experienced by Indian Hindus and Christians, I often ran into a difference between how both populations viewed and communicated the foundations of these experiences or perspectives of hope. Further, varying degrees of "religiousness" made comparative nature of this ethnography somewhat awkward at times. While many people in the study considered themselves religious or committed to their faith, and demonstrated this through participation in a variety of embodied practices independently or in community, others demonstrated their strong convictions or faith by referring to commitment to a cognitive or doctrinal framework. For those demonstrating hope in embodied or social ways, often it was through our discussions that the idea of hope entered their consciousness in relationship to the practices in which they were taking part. This was more often the case with Hindus. For example, one Hindu informant, after reflecting

upon my questions about hope for a few minutes, suggested that hope came to her with the change in seasons. Though she had not realized it before the interview, she said it was the sunlight that gave her a spiritual sense of connection with nature, itself being hopeful. For those referring to cognitive or doctrinal ideas, hope was often related to trials already past where individuals could recall evidence of God acting on promises believed to shield or provide either from scriptural texts or within their own lives. Some connected hope with the desire to share their faith with others; this was most often the case with Christians. At times, participants suggested that they demonstrated hope through participation in an activity such as attending church or prayer or helping others. More often, though, Christians sighted cognitive beliefs such as "Jesus rose from the dead" as the root of hope because the actions in which they participated were motivated by or contingent upon their cognitive beliefs, in many cases. There were some exceptions, however, which I will also include in the ethnographic accounts in upcoming chapters. Methodologically, I found the general difference between hope embodied in activity with Hindus and hope communicated with words by Christians to provide a limited point of comparison. However, identifying essential differences was not the main purpose of my study. I intentionally conducted my research across the two groups with the hope that a fuller range of data would emerge. Thus, the challenges inherent in the research regarding comparisons did not compromise my ability to pursue descriptions of hope in both these populations. Ultimately, by the completion of my field work, I could recognize that these differences actually provided a more comprehensive view into how the concept of hope might prism out in more varied ways than could be seen in only one faith group.

Varying Degrees of Familiarity

A final challenge to this research was my varied familiarity with practices that challenged my ability to participate or that caused my informants to use phrases or terms that were assumed to be understood without an explanation. One example of this unfamiliarity in practice took place at a Garba dance that I attended during the festival of Navaratri with an interlocutor who suddenly wanted me to be her partner in the dances. Since she was planning to attend with another friend who would be her partner and had not notified me that the dances were comprised of intricate steps that I did not know, I was not able to participate when her dance partner cancelled. Previous familiarity with the event would have enabled me to realize that I needed to learn the dance steps before attending, giving me further access to data derived from participation. However, due to my inability to engage in the dance, conversations emerged that highlighted hope I previously had not recognized in the interlocutor. I will share more about this event in Chapter Four.

In quite a different setting, I referred to the movement by one person from the Hindu faith to Christianity as having "converted." Because this was a setting where Hindus and Christians came together in worship, and because those offering the service were intentionally trying to be inclusive and inoffensive, I was told quite clearly that the word "conversion" is uncomfortable and should be avoided. Later I was given a brief history of how this word is psychologically reminiscent of oppression and a denial of ethnicity for many Hindus, rather than just an expression about religious choice. While I did wish that I had been more familiar with that goal before using a forbidden word in their presence,

the misstep was useful in unveiling the deep hope that this community has of not causing offense or making others uneasy with divisive or competitive words.

On the other end of the spectrum, I had many conversations with Christians who used words, phrases and references to Bible passages without further explanation because I had disclosed my personal engagement with the Christian tradition. I felt compelled to interrupt during several interviews to clarify terms or what was specifically intended by a phrase or scriptural passage, knowing that there can be multiple layers of meaning or interpretation even within the Christian tradition. In these cases, the challenge was too much, rather than too little, familiarity. However, consistent with "social perspective taking" previously mentioned in the work of Finefter-Rosenbluh, these situations yielded rich discussions, which allowed a greater understanding between the participants and myself. Further, occasionally increased realizations regarding the meaning of hope transpired in the participants through the act of explaining meanings of these terms and phrases.

These challenges with situating oneself and making awkward attempts to do and say things that best fit within a research setting are to be expected. They were navigated through attempts to understand and participate appropriately in most situations, and to apologize when I could not or when I had broken codes of understanding or disappointed my informants. The challenges noted here were easily navigated, and they illuminated rich insights into the hopes of the individuals or groups involved that I may have missed without them.

Intentional Reflexivity

I want to reiterate my continual intention toward reflexivity in all stages of the research. If, as Davies suggests, reflexivity "expresses researcher's awareness of their necessary connection to the research situation and hence their effects upon it,"[41] a thorough consideration of my choice of research population and topic, method, and recording and selection of notes I would include in the ethnographic analysis was critical. Like Davies suggests, I wanted to conduct ethnographic research that embraced its "intrinsic multi-layered reflexivity without turning inward to a complete self-absorption that undermines [my] capacity to explore other societies and cultures."[42] This was most blatantly necessary with regard to my own understanding and experience of hoping throughout the study. In some instances on the field or in analysis, I have had to question whether or not these personal perspectives of hope were shaping my recording, interpretation and presentation of the data.

Theoretical Framework

A Review of Relevant Research on Hope from Several Disciplines

Concurrent with the photo-elicitation interviews, I conducted research on hope across literature in several disciplines. As mentioned earlier, historically many of the theoretical contributions to the study of hope were confined to disciplines of philosophy and

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[41] Charlotte Aull Davies and NetLibrary, Inc. *Reflexive Ethnography : A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*, 7.
[42] *Ibid., 26*

theology. Authors such as Averill, Catlin and Chon[43] and Alan Mittleman[44] have offered helpful synopses of historical theories about hope from theologians such as Aquinas and Moltmann as well as philosophers such as Kant, Nietzshe, Kierkegaard, Spinoza and Bloch. These overviews demonstrate that hope has been portrayed at times as beneficial and virtuous and at others as a dangerous pitfall. In the Oxford Handbook of Hope, Callina, Snow and Murray offer a similar overview of historical perspectives including the suggestion that hope is a passion and cognition from Thomas Hobbes, René Descartes, John Lock and David Hume, summarizing the overall "bare-bones conception that hope is a desire for an end perceived to be good and the belief that the end is possible."[45]

Recently, however, hope has been recognized as a phenomenon that transcends those disciplines. As the concept of emotion in religion has become more prominent, one can find chapters in Handbooks such as the Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion or entire works such as the Oxford Handbook of Hope dedicated to analyzing and describing hope through a broader lens. A common introduction in much of the recent literature about hope is the acknowledgment of the shortage of research on hope in disciplines other than philosophy and theology, and the call for more diversified research methodology. A few key theories have been put forward recently, demonstrating that

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[43] James Averill, George Catlin, and Kyum Chon. *Rules of Hope*. (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1990), 2-7.
[44] Mittleman, A. *Hope in a Democratic Age: Philosophy, Religion, and Political Theory*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), Chapters 2-6.
[45] Mathew Gallagher, and Shane Lopez. *The Oxford Handbook of Hope*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 12.

some are rising to answer the call that C.R. Snyder[46] and Vincent Crapanzano[47] have sounded within their respective disciplines for more research on hope "as a category of social and psychological analysis." After providing an overview of a few perspectives on hope, Crapanzano specifically asks, "Why has a category of experience we value so highly—and not just in religious terms—had only an incidental role in our ethnographic explorations and social and psychological understanding?"[48] In some of these works, variations in hope across cultures are specified with regard to the influence of faith[49] and differences in goals or levels of agency.[50] The earlier historical explorations of the meaning of hope and its suggested opposites (fear and despair) have provided an interesting backdrop against which to explore what hope manifest in current populations might entail, and they have played an important role in naming the significance of hope in the study of humanity. Further, they have left a remaining identified need that has been useful as a launching place for current research. Though many valuable contributions have been made historically in philosophy and theology as well as psychology and anthropology, I will explore only the last two disciplines in the upcoming sections because their contributions have been most recent, and their theories are most applicable to the fieldwork in this study.

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[46] C. Richard Synder. "The past and Possible Futures of Hope." *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 19.1 (2000): 11-28.
[47] Vincent Crapanzano. "Reflections on Hope as a Category of Social and Psychological Analysis." *Cultural Anthropology* 18.1 (2003): 3-32.
[48] Crapanzano. *Imaginative Horizons: an Essay in Literary-Philosophical Anthropology*, 99.
[49] James Averill, George Catlin, and Kyum Chon. *Rules of Hope*, 72.
[50] Gallagher and Lopez. *The Oxford Handbook of Hope*, 100.

Psychological Perspectives

C.R. Snyder, who created a hope measurement scale where he defines hope as a combination of perceived goals and a sense of agency to meet those goals, stands as a major recent contributor to hope theory in positive psychology.[51] Other contributors such as Matthew Gallagher and Shane Lopez, have built upon Snyder's Hope Theory, utilizing the hope measurement tool in a variety of studies to research how hope, according to Snyder's definition, affects areas of life such as psychological adjustment, coping, academic achievement or athletic performance.[52] Further correlational studies have also noted the effects of hope on academic and athletic success,[53] physical wellbeing[54] and healing.[55] Related phenomena such as optimism[56] and self-efficacy as defined by Bandura[57] have been concurrently researched, providing statistical correlation with hope to varying degrees in many areas of life, with overall consensus suggesting that these phenomena definitely have areas of strong overlap and can even possibly affect each other in various ways, but they are not completely redundant categories and should maintain their significance as independent entities for study. This research has been

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[51] C. Richard Snyder, Cheri Harris, John R. Anderson, Sharon A. Holleran, Lori M. Irving, Sandra T. Sigmon, Lauren Yoshinobu, June Gibb, Charyle Langelle, and Pat Harney. "The Will and the Ways: Development and Validation of an Individual-Differences Measure of Hope." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 60, no. 4 (1991): 570-85.
C. Richard Snyder. *The Psychology of Hope: You Can Get There from Here*. (New York: Free Press, 1994),
C. Richard Snyder. *Handbook of Hope*. (San Diego, CA: Academic, 2000).
[52] Gallagher, Matthew W., and Lopez, Shane J. *The Oxford Handbook of Hope*, 37.
[53] Lewis Curry, C. Richard Snyder, David Cook, Brent Ruby, Michael Rehm, and Russell Geen. "Role of Hope in Academic and Sport Achievement." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73.6 (1997): 1257-267.
[54] For example: Lori Irving, Leslie Telfer, and Dudley David Blake. "Hope, Coping, and Social Support in Combat-related Posttraumatic Stress Disorder." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 10.3 (1997): 465-79.
[55] For example: Michael Valle, Scott Huebner and Shannon Suldo. "An Analysis of Hope as a Psychological Strength." *Journal of School Psychology* 44.5 (2006): 393-406.
[56] For example: Yuhsuan Chang, Peng-Chih Wang, Hung-Hui Li, and Yi-Chung Liu. "Relations among Depression, Self-efficacy and Optimism in a Sample of Nurses in Taiwan." *Journal of Nursing Management* 19.6 (2011): 769-76
[57] Albert Bandura. *Self-efficacy in Changing Societies*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995).

useful in that it recognizes hope and its possible phenomenological relatives as major indicators of success, health and happiness, according to Snyder's definition. As such, the findings have implications for anticipating and identifying human deficits so that they can be understood better and ideally bolstered. Studies using these models and scales have been applied to populations such as children, cancer-patients, older adults and specific ethnic groups.[58] The findings demonstrate that where goals and agency are high, these populations fare better, establishing the importance of hope as a benefit in many areas of life. Overcoming blockages in pathways (goals) or addressing a loss of agency are the recommended antidote for increasing hope. However, finding a means to hope at times when these pathways or agency are permanently blocked has yet to be researched more completely. Further, examining benefits of the processes of working through such blockages such as the development human virtue, in addition to the wellbeing that arises from overcoming these blockages would be very helpful in this model. Also, recognizing that some regression or stagnation might be a necessary part of the hoping process would create more space for the one longing to avoid being "without hope" during times of struggle.

Anthropological Perspectives

In anthropological studies, Hirokazu Miyazaki and Vincent Crapanzano have categorized hope in terms of action or passivity. Crapanzano refers to Snyder as "America's latest

[58] For example: Joanna Shadlow, Richard Boles, Michael Roberts and Lauren Winston. "Native American Children and Their Reports of Hope: Construct Validation of the Children's Hope Scale." *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 24.6 (2015): 1707-714.

hope guru" who claims that hope can be "taught and learned."[59] Snyder's claim seems to strongly contradict what Crapanzano suggests are the limitations of hope, such as its paralyzing effect of creating passivity, which results in inevitable hopelessness and fear. Like Minkowski, who suggests that hope goes beyond expectation, "separates us from immediate contact with ambient becoming," and "suppresses the embrace of expectation and permits me to look freely," Crapanzano seems to advocate that hope is a process that acts almost as a buffer against agency.[60] In his *Reflections on Hope*, Crapanzano reminds us that Kierkegaard named hope as "un untrustworthy shipmaster" which can lead us to a state of inaction.[61] Through his explanations of Burridge's work with Melanesians, he describes the effect of myth-dreams that create space for hoping in a situation that, in Crapanzano's view, seems to create a kind of blind passivity. *Reflections on Hope* concludes with a story from Burridge's experience with a villager in Tangu who asks him what a mysterious triangle was named that had been drawn on a map in the sand of the cosmos.[62] The villager suggested that Burridge must know the name of the unidentified triangle, but when Burridge admits he has no idea what the meaning of the triangle might be, the villager explains that no one had seen that place or knew its name. It seemed to be a place of hope, a location that was somewhat indefinable but mysteriously desirable. Given its unknown quality, one could only passively long for it. That passivity can put

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[59] Vincent Crapanzano. "Reflections on Hope as a Category of Social and Psychological Analysis," 8.
[60] Eugene Minkowski, and Nancy Metzel, *Lived Time : Phenomenological and Psychopathological Studies*. (Evanston, Il: Northwestern UP, 1970), 100.
[61] Crapanzano, "Reflections on Hope as a Category of Social and Psychological Analysis"19. Refers to Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or, Part I*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).
[62] Kenelm Burridge. *Mambu: A Melanesian Millennium.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 11.

others in a position to provide answers even when answers are not known. This is similar, Crapanzano suggests, to the work that anthropologists do.[63]

Somewhat in dialogue with Crapanzano's work, Miyazaki examines gift giving in Fijian culture as an inroad to ideas about hope as an end versus hope as a means.[64] Miyazaki responds to Bloch's philosophical acknowledgement that hope causes difficulties when one philosophically tries to define it due to its temporal nature. He continues on to suggest that hope can be a means, a method toward understanding or knowledge, rather than solely the end product.[65] Tracing the government's response to souvenir sellers in Fiji, Miyazaki helpfully compares this act of understanding Fijian sword selling with Kelly and Kaplan's explanation of the process by which Fijians give gifts' with hope as a means to an end.[66] In his work on global capitalism in Japan, Miyazaki critiques social theories for missing agency as a critical part of hope.[67] While hope has been a suggested topic for study within the promotion of peace in social and political theory, such as Michael Tausig's comments in the interview orchestrated by Mary Zournazi, how one is to harness the energy necessary to set hope in action seems to be missing from the literature.[68] Like Snyder, Miyazaki believes that both pathways and agency are crucial

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[63] Crapanzano. "Reflections on Hope as a Category of Social and Psychological Analysis," 25.
[64] Hirokazu Miyazaki. "From Sugar Cane to 'Swords': Hope and the Extensibility of the Gift in Fiji." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11.2 (2005): 277-95.
[65] Hirokazu Miyazaki. *The Method of Hope : Anthropology, Philosophy, and Fijian Knowledge*. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 2004), 25.
[66] John Dunham Kelly, and Martha Kaplan. *Represented Communities : Fiji and World Decolonization*. (Chicago: U of Chicago, 2001), 104.
[67] Hirokazu Miyazaki. "Economy of Dreams: Hope in Global Capitalism and Its Critiques." *Cultural Anthropology* 21.2 (2006): 147-72.
[68] Mary Zournazi. *Hope: New Philosophies for Change.* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 43.

both to the individual, but also to society; hope is a resource and a method that can facilitate social change by virtue of being active.

A further fascinating illustration of Miyazaki's method is explored in Elliot's work entailing the working through of agency with a passive acceptance of the will of God in the lives of Muslim women in Morocco.[69] She demonstrates how hope requires an active participation in the working through of that predestined will by giving us a glimpse into the lives of women seeking husbands for marriage. While their belief that they are predestined by God to find the specific man that God wills, they also believe that they have to actively make themselves available and attractive to any possible man. Finding God's will "seems to require action rather than to impede it." Whereas others have suggested that theological ideas that contain such notions of predestination instigate passivity, this study clearly shows that hope for marriage is realized by both a passive acceptance of God's will along with active participation in God's working it out for these Moroccan women. Implications of agency or passivity in finding a marriage partner will re-emerge in Chapter Six, as well as issues of attachment and happiness in marriage as it relates to the means by which one is selected or the number of lives one is married to the same partner.

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[69] Alice Elliot. "The Makeup of Destiny: Predestination and the Labor of Hope in a Moroccan Emigrant Town." *American Ethnologist* 43, no. 3 (2016): 488–99.

References in these works to temporality and agency seemed to both contradict and to confirm aspects of hope that emerged in my study. For example, within the two interviews shared earlier by Christian Indian interlocutors, the hopes that they seemed to consider fulfilled launched them into further action to share hope, suggesting that their hope for salvation could be seen as both an end in itself and the means to others receiving the same end. In Sindu's hope for a "love"[70] marriage, she could be perceived as becoming passive by retreating to the temple, but she viewed that agential act as actively seeking the blessing of Ganesh who she believed was her advocate. While similar forms of agency were required and present in the situations of the members of the diaspora in Chicago who participated in my research, hope seemed to include a much broader spectrum of experience than attaining an object of desire such as a husband or social recognition. Miyazaki's (and Bloch's) analysis of hope as a means rather than the end, capture aspects of this broader spectrum. Still, there were intersections of hope with other emotions, such as fear, doubt, guilt, and sadness within the Indian diaspora that seemed to actually enhance their experiences of hope, coloring in between lines of named goals with surprising hues that shot prisms of wholeness and beauty through their stories, ideas and pursuits. In the subsequent chapters, I will explore these themes in more detail.

Jarrett Zigon promotes an even more complex understanding of hope. Responding to both Crapanzano and Miyazaki intentionally, and perhaps it can be said to Snyder's Hope

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[70] "Love marriage" is an expression often used within the diaspora community as a way to differentiate arranged marriage from those that are initiated by the spouses directly. Those with arranged marriages suggested that they are not offended by this term and did not believe it ever implied that arranged marriages do not include love.

Theory unintentionally, Zigon takes hope into more of a phenomenological yet still methodological approach through his ethnographic work with Muscovites.[71] His work clearly stands in contrast to the notion that hope is about only specific goals or an orientation to the future. Neither is he comfortable with the dichotomy between hope as either a passive or an active process. Leaning on Alain Badiou's distillation of hope as promoted by St Paul in the Christian scriptures,[72] Zigon describes hope as a "temporal attitudinal backdrop," and he synthesizes Badiou's hope concept as "perseverance along the trajectory established by the event of Christ's resurrection." This could be viewed as the more passive element of hope. However, Zigon does not stop there. He makes the case through his illustrations with the Muscovite interlocutors that there are times when specific action is necessary toward specific goals. The general attitude of hope is enhanced by specific life action to make life "sane," which is a concept Zigon borrows from Talad Asad[73] where sane means a "creative process of living acceptably in the social world that is already there." He reminds us that Badiou likens hope to fidelity, where "to have fidelity is to have perseverance in the maintenance of a way of life" but also "fidelity on occasion necessitates active and reflective work to reinforce that which must be maintained."[74]

On one hand, I believe that these ideas of Crapanzano, Miyazaki and Zigon are not at odds with Snyder's theory in Positive Psychology, where "pathway thinking" might be at

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[71] Jarrett Zigon. "Hope Dies Last: Two Aspects of Hope in Contemporary Moscow." *Anthropological Theory* 9, no. 3 (2009): 258.
[72] Badiou, Alain, and Brassier, Ray. *Saint Paul : The Foundation of Universalism*. Cultural Memory in the Present. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003).
[73] Talal Asad. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 73.
[74] Zigon, "Hope Dies Last: Two Aspects of Hope in Contemporary Moscow," 260.

least superficially compared with background attitude (passivity) and future/goal orientation might be compared with the active stance prescribed by both Miyazaki and to a lesser or qualified degree by Zigon. However, I assert that further illustrations of lived hope[75] made possible through participant observation add a much richer and more comprehensive understanding of what hope might entail, and especially what happens within one during the hoping process. It is from this observed perspective of hope that I suggest hope is both passive and active, that it is both a reflective attitude and a call to engage, or to contend with that which stands between oneself and one's goals, even when some backwards steps are necessary. I harken back to the idea of the temporal, where there is both a now and a "not yet," which calls for both a passive or reflective acknowledgement of the present, and willingness and the energy to move beyond.

Naming this movement and spatial quality stops short of what I believe can be offered in understanding the concept of hope. Alan Mittleman, in his *Hope in a Democratic Age*, allows for this naming of conflicting or contentious realities and the anxiety that they often produce in hope, but suggests that there is virtue in persevering in the process, not only because of the resulting benefits that Snyder and his colleagues suggest, but because "being hopeful in the moment can be expressive of our dignity as persons."[76] Mittleman allows for negative or backward movement away from objects of desire to be

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[75] I use the term "lived hope" here in a similar way to McGuire's use of "lived religion." Whereas McGuire utilizes the term in her *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* to refer to "religion-as-lived in ordinary, everyday contexts," I use "lived hope" to connote the actions (and attitudinal posture held during those actions) in everyday contexts where one is expressing or seeking to express a hope. Sometimes these are explicitly communicated before hand. At other times, these were actions and postures that led to conversations where they came to be understood as a part of the hoping process only upon reflection at a later time.

[76] Alan Mittleman. *Hope in a Democratic Age: Philosophy, Religion, and Political Theory*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 34.

acknowledged and even assessed as valuable in the process of hoping. I would argue that this is key to understanding hope on a new level, recognizing what hope does when it is manifest in a specific population. This reference to the past, or backward movement, is present in Lempert's[77] work on genitive hope among aboriginals as well. With regard to the longstanding effects of settler-colonial history, Lempert refers to Lear's Radical Hope[78] as the "best that can be achieved" as a reconciliation of past with the present and future of the aboriginal societal hopes that he encountered.[79] Paralleling this, I would like to offer a complex picture of hope illustrated through three categories experienced and communicated by the Indian diaspora in my study, where temporality and space are considered, along with backward and forward movement, a mixing of emotion and desire that is ultimately "positive" in its trajectory while creating value at the point of their intersection.

Offering another related anthropological study, and from a slightly altered angle, Pederson describes hope manifest in a Mongolian society where typically dispersed assemblages are brought together and reordered in moments of hope for socio-economic change.[80] The work of hoping is viewed as the practical and helpful response of men, such as Hamid and his friends, to life in a constantly changing and unpredictable society, even if specific hopes might seem irrational on a surface level. Pederson suggests that people are seen by themselves and others as whole persons only during moments of

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[77] William Lempert. "Generative Hope in the Postapocalyptic Present." *Cultural Anthropology* 33, no. 2 (2018): 202-12.
[78] John Lear. *Radical Hope*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
[79] Lempert. "Generative Hope in the Postapocalyptic Present," 202-12.
[80] Morten Pedersen. "A Day in the Cadillac: The Work of Hope in Urban Mongolia." *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 56.2 (2012): 136-51.

hoping.[81] Though certainly not without challenge or moments of doubt, continuing to hope through a time of uncertainty is adaptive and beneficial. Pederson echoes Mittleman's suggestion that being hopeful can be expressive of dignity as a person.

Finally, Jakimow reiterates the importance of hope for those in changing societies.[82] Through her research with the people of Telangana, India, Jakimow explores the role of hope via education as a means to ward off despair in the face of assumed dire futures of physical laborers. She leans on Ahmed's perspective of hope as a defensive shield against the realities of life, giving agency towards goals even when known to be impossible to reach. Jakimow uses Berlant's descriptions of clusters of hope as "objects of desire"[83] to help describe how the people of Telangana, India cling to education as a buoy that offers a kind of rationality to their irrational pursuit of something that they already know will not deliver the changes they deeply desire. Hope gives those who hold it something to do, a means for agency, even if no other form of agency is possible. Jakimow quotes Berlant, "Maintaining the pretense that they are playing the game, affords them "room . . . for a little cramped fantasy about spaces of the good life or good times ahead."[84] While Jakimow was not particularly as positive about hope, I highlight her work to illustrate that simply the act, or work, of hoping can itself be the cause of the experience of hope, especially when no other work can be done to further one in the direction of a desired change. She seems to imply that hope acts as a stabilizer in the absence of material

[81] *Ibid.*
[82] Tanya Jakimow. "Clinging to Hope through Education: The Consequences of Hope for Rural Laborers in Telangana, India." *Ethos* 44.1 (2016): 11-31.
[83] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*. (Durham: Duke UP, 2011), 163.

[84] *Ibid.*

evidence that positive change is possible or imminent. I agree with Jakimow that hope can have this positive stabilizing effect and is beneficial even beyond helping us attain the objects of desire.

Theoretical Synthesis and Application

Therefore, broadening the definition of hope to include negative emotions such as doubt and fear, and allowing hope to entail some backwards movement away from the object of desire at times, is a relevant and useful endeavor. I will argue in the following chapters that hope manifests as bi-directional and multi-faceted, which entails the holding of tensions such as past and future, loss and desire, and rejection and acceptance. If Snyder and the Positive Psychologists are correct in recognizing that hope is useful and beneficial in many aspects of life, and Crapanzano, Miyazaki and Zigon are correct in recognizing that both a passive stance and an active engagement are critical elements of hope, my aim is to suggest that holding these tensions inherent in the act of hoping might be part of the benefit of hope. I suggest that hoping is akin to traversing a high rope over the space where past and future, forward and backward movement, and progress and resignation are negotiated. In the chapters to come, three expanses that require such a suspended rope for the participants in my research will be explored: the hope to be accepted, the hope to make a contribution and the hope to be true to oneself. These journeys across chasms of space were processes where past and future were brought into conversation, where rejection, friendship and acclimation were sometimes simultaneous and where the shedding of darkness and the illumination of a sense of authenticity was as painful as it was lovely, and as confusing as it was clarifying for those in my study.

Key Issues Regarding Hope in the Diaspora

This research provides a focus on the emotional task and costs of such negotiations especially pertaining to assimilation and movement within the diaspora and wider communities, and with regard to dissemination of faith traditions. We will see that individuals and groups make many advances towards assimilation and corporate celebration of faith with set backs due to many factors such as prejudices from outside the diaspora, pressures from within the community and personal issues with self, others and God. Reflecting upon these advances and set backs in the context of hope research demonstrates that the work of negotiating identity and faith includes many factors that have been named, but unrecognized as part of the larger task of hoping within the literature as of yet. That is, while much research has considered aspects of negotiation of identity and faith, the internal, arduous task of hoping has been missing from the research. By focusing on hope, I am adding descriptive accounts to literature on the negotiation of cultural and religious identity of Indian diaspora in the US, and considered a new and relevant aspect of their experience that previously has been absent from the literature.

Further, the accounts of women in this research specifically examine some of the assumptions that Chatterji and Washbrook call us to reconsider. Through the essays of their recent handbook, Chatterji and Washbrook suggest that the roles of women as cultural boundary makers and keepers, as well as their role in marriage have been called

into reconsideration.[85] They suggest, "We need to learn a great deal more about the movement of women, both within and outside the context of marriage, since early modern times."[86] This research addresses the movements of women in the diaspora with regard to both roles in marriage and in cultural boundary keeping. Through the story of "Jyothi," who had to relinquish her worship of her former family Gods, we will witness the transmitting of faith with regard to her newly adopted deity, Lakshmi, as she includes her daughter in a business endeavor which modeled the cultural and religious value of financial prosperity. I will describe the rejection of "Deepa" by her husband's family due to her Indian ethnicity despite her converting to his family's faith tradition. We will trace the journey of "Rupa" as an uneducated mother of academically struggling children, in trying desperately to be acceptable within the middle class diaspora despite not having stereotypical credentials or abilities, and we will hear how "Nitara," despite being accepted and accomplished, does not view acceptance within the diaspora as enough for the expression of her true self. Through these various accounts and many more, I will provide close attention to the process of hoping in the lives of these women, and their role as wives and mothers. Through them, I will argue that hoping is a complex and difficult process that requires the negotiating of all those influences previously named. Rather than simply describing the roles of women or trends in family life, I will argue that the process of performing a role or participating in a trend can be complicated and sometimes painful because of the complexity of holding the tension of all the influences involved.

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[85] Joya Chatterji and David Washbrook. *Routledge Handbook of the South Asian Diaspora*, 7
[86] *Ibid.*

In providing three categories of hoping, including the hope to be accepted, to make a contribution and to be true to oneself, I will demonstrate that there is some commonality between members of the Indian diaspora of different genders, professional achievements and religious traditions in the metropolitan Chicago area. While I have acknowledged that these categories are intentionally porous, they have provided a useful analytical framework through which we can understand behaviors and moods that might otherwise not be considered similar. For example, the sending of remittances back to India has been studied with regard to the perspective of "homeland" by Indians in the diaspora, and acknowledgement of remittances back to India through networks and associations suggest that the diaspora can be viewed as organized, efficient and successful at promoting Indian identity abroad. However, if categorized as part of a hope for contribution, remittances and networks can be newly compared and contrasted with something seemingly quite unrelated, such as Shanta's willingness to tutor me in Hindi free of charge. Literature on the negotiation of identity, prominent in diaspora literature, seldom includes the dynamic between the repetitive desire to give and the challenges posed to the process of identity negotiation. Therefore, the three categories in this work have illuminated a new and useful organizational framework, but might also be advantageous for continual research related to these hopes.

Chapter Conclusion

My aim in this chapter has been to provide a description of the methods selected and utilized and some of the challenges faced throughout the field research. I have also

provided an overview of some debates within the literature about hope, highlighting aspects of the debates that were particularly relevant during my fieldwork. I discussed perspectives regarding issues of temporality and passivity versus agency, debates about whether hope be viewed as positive or negative, and perspectives of some researchers correlating hope with success and other benefits as a measurable construct. Next, I suggested a theoretical framework by which we can understand how hope functioned and was described by the participants in my study. Finally, I have highlighted some key issues that will be manifest in the ethnographic accounts to come. The chapters to come will illustrate these perspectives of hope through three categories that emerged during the research, which include the hope to be accepted, the hope to make a contribution and the hope for to be true to oneself.

CHAPTER THREE: Diasporic Context

Before describing the three main themes on hope that have emerged in the course of my field research, it is important to provide an overview of the contextual environment in which the groups in the Indian diaspora in Chicago are situated. Migration has been a global phenomenon since the beginning of recorded history. Because it is the source of change that affects millions of people annually, it is a reality that necessitates continual research and action. In this chapter, I aim to describe this trend as it relates with the Indian diaspora, defining "diaspora" in the process. I will describe how populations of diaspora compare worldwide, and the factors that are contributing to its recent increase. Next, I will suggest that research on the Indian diaspora is particularly important, as it is the largest diaspora in the world. In the process, I will define the term "Indian" while providing an overview of the influences that shape the malleable and evolving Indian identity in the US. I will describe the Indian diaspora in the context of Chicago itself, noting the history of the city, the other diaspora groups present and the current trend of the diaspora to be located outside of the city proper, in the suburbs surrounding Chicago noting influences of caste and class. Finally, I will provide an overview of the specific locations and populations in which the fieldwork of my study took place. The impact of the contextual factors on the Indian diaspora in Chicago will be most poignant and clear when manifest in the narratives of the participants that will follow in the following three chapters.

Trends in Migration and Diaspora Defined

The UN World Migration report of 2018 suggests that migration, while benefitting migrants and "host"[87] societies with a wide array of beneficial opportunities, has also created urgent needs for new policy addressing critical issues in recent years, such as integration programs and border management.[88] As diaspora groups increase, dynamics change within the identities of the groups and individuals involved, the relationships between a diaspora group and its country of origin, between diaspora groups and cultures of host countries, and between different diaspora groups. The need and potential for researching these dynamics increases in correlation with the rise of migration. Before suggesting causes of this rise, let me first define what is be meant by "diaspora" throughout this work.

Using Dwivedi's broad definition in *Tracing the New Indian Diaspora,* "diaspora" will refer throughout this work to "a person or community of people living outside of their original homeland, whether legally or illegally."[89] As Dwivedi explains, "Dating from the third century BC, the term 'diaspora' derives from the Greek *diaspeirein* (*dia* 'across' and *speirein* 'to sow or scatter').[90] From the etymology it becomes clear that the term 'diaspora' implies the act of translation and difference, accompanied with a re-imagining

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[87] This term, meaning the receiving country in which the immigrants now reside, has been challenged. Hinnells writes, "Most recent migrants find the wider White society anything but a host, it is often alien, prejudiced, and vocal extremists call for repatriation." Harold Coward et al. *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States*. (State University of New York Press, 2000), 3.
[88] "World Migration Report 2018:" Chapter 2 - Migration and migrants: A global overview | IOM Online Bookstore. Accessed October 31, 2019. https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2018-chapter-2-migration-and-migrants-global-overview.
[89] Om Prakash Dwivedi. *Tracing the New Indian Diaspora*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), xi.
[90] *Ibid.*

of territories in new ways."[91] Though the forced migration of Jews out the kingdoms of Israel and Judah around 700 and 600 years BCE respectively were the earliest groups described as diaspora, the term has been used more broadly over time to describe all people living outside of their home countries for any reason.[92]

With diaspora populations increasing by the month in some locations, and the systems in place for recording immigrant status varying broadly, tracking and retrieving actual numbers of diaspora populations can be problematic. Still, the influences of migrant populations are so critical that considering even somewhat divergent numbers between reports is useful. According to the 2018 World Migration Report,

> Overall, the estimated number of international migrants has increased over the past four-and-a-half decades. The total estimated 244 million people living in a country other than their country of birth in 2015 is almost 100 million more than in 1990 (when it was 153 million), and over three times the estimated number in 1970 (84 million).[93]

Migration transpires for myriad reasons whether inspired, forced, hospitably offered or reluctantly tolerated. These reasons are extremely varied and complex. "Push and pull factors" are often involved.[94] Push factors, which are the causes of migrants leaving their home of origin, commonly include persecution, war, violence, poor wages, unavailability of jobs, famine, natural disaster and family separation. Pull factors, then, stem from the desire to find solutions to these issues elsewhere, such as safety, freedom, stability, jobs

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[91] *Ibid*.
[92] *Ibid*.
[93] "World Migration Report 2018:" Chapter 2 - Migration and migrants: A global overview | IOM Online Bookstore. Accessed October 31, 2019. https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2018-chapter-2-migration-and-migrants-global-overview.
[94] "Root Causes of Migration." Justice for Immigrants, March 15, 2017. https://justiceforimmigrants.org/what-we-are-working-on/immigration/root-causes-of-migration/.

or higher wages, food and reunification of family.[95] Because there are economic, cultural/social, religious, political and even physical changes to any nation or city hosting or sending migrants in these quantities, studying the diaspora of any given location can facilitate human understanding and peace within that community and beyond.

Recent Literature on South Asian Diaspora

Due to its immense and increasing size, the need for continuing research about this important diaspora group is imminent. Some recent works on the South Asian diaspora, specifically including Indian diaspora, have traced the historical roots, considered causes and influences on migration, and described tasks performed by these migrant populations from South Asia.

Judith Brown's *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora* provided a "broad analytical way into the subject," in 2006.[96] She acknowledges that the last two and a half centuries have dramatically increased the migration of people all over the globe. Because South Asians make up such a large portion of this increase, she states, "The absolute size as well as the distribution and concentration of people of South Asian descent outside the subcontinent makes their migratory experience of considerable interest and importance."[97] She then suggests that each generational group of migrants has a critical set of tasks to perform, such as establishing new homes and social networks. As she thematically explores these tasks, Brown suggests that empathy might emerge in

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[95] *Ibid.*
[96] Brown and MyiLibrary. *Global South Asians : Introducing the Modern Diaspora*, 3.
[97] *Ibid.*

readers, as they consider all that the immigrants must undertake to become successful in the diaspora.[98] The flow of people, goods and ideas that are related to this immigrant movement are critical to consider, Brown suggests, as well as the impact on religious pluralism. Very few South Indian immigrants in the American diaspora become Christians, Brown explains, and those who do must often contend with significant ostracism from those remaining in their traditions. Most South Asians Christians migrate from India already established in their Christian tradition. Brown notes that very little research has been offered on Christians in diasporic South Asian groups. She writes, "Much more work needs to be done on the adaptation of South Asian Christians to life in an increasingly secularizing West, and on the possible differences between the way they live in the diaspora compared with their non-Christian South Asian counterparts."[99] Both the consideration of the adaptation of South Asian Christians and a comparison with non-Christian South Asian counterparts have been intentional foci within my research.

Then, Sunil Amrith argues that modern Asian history must include recognition of the significant and lasting changes which migrants have made in economic, environmental, political and religious realms.[100] Amrith discusses some important debates regarding migration among South Asians including coercive or agential causes, cultural consequences of migration and the diverse manifestations of those consequences in multiple diasporas globally. He also considers historical perspectives of governmental regulations on migration of South Asians over time, with the influence of migration on

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[98] *Ibid.,172.*
[99] *Ibid.,95-96.*
[100] Sunil Amrith. *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia*, 194.

state formation on modern Asia. As a complement to standard historical accounts of migration, Amrith uses thematic narratives that are possibly more accurate in their "messy" portrayal of modified chronology.[101] He suggests that "following people's journeys gives us a way to emphasize the centrality of human agency—people's choices, their compromises, their struggles, their suffering—in shaping and negotiating the forces of globalization."[102] In a time when ideas of statehood and nationhood are at the forefront of political and social awareness, Amrith's suggestion that following the journeys of people who are negotiating and shaping the forces, which are heightening these boundaries, is a call researchers cannot ignore. The research I have conducted does just that by focusing upon narratives of the Christian and Hindu Indian diaspora in Chicago.

A discussion regarding the relationship between diaspora and the formation of nationalist modes of thinking can also be found in he *Routledge Handbook of the South Asian Diaspora*.[103] After establishing that Asia has always entailed mobile societies that have been moving about for myriad reasons such as soldiering, mercantile exchange, scribal duties and laborer recruitment, editors Chatterji and Washbrook clarify that the flow of people, goods and ideas has to be understood in the context of its longevity, diversity and scale throughout history, rather than merely as a recent phenomenon.[104] In fact, paths of previous migration have undoubtedly influenced some current patterns of migration within and beyond borders of current nations in Asia. By understanding some of these

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[101] *Ibid.*
[102] *Ibid.*
[103] Joya Chatterji, and David Washbrook. *Routledge Handbook of the South Asian Diaspora*. (London: Routledge, 2018), 15.
[104] *Ibid., 1.*

past movements, which are investigated through the many chapters of the *Handbook*, we can begin to see the present day migratory reality within its long and influential historical context. Ideas of a "homeland," which have sometimes been included in the constituents of the definition of diaspora, has been called into question through revisiting some past patterns of migration in Asia.[105] Chatterji and Washbrook explain that constant mobility due to many causes described in the chapters of the *Handbook*, such as pilgrims and adventurers in Washbrook's chapter or the itinerant merchants in Ballard's work, demonstrate the ideas of agency versus victimization are now being contended, questions about nationhood and its influence are coming to the forefront, and definitions of the term "diaspora" have been opened for discussion when the present diaspora is placed in this historical context of migratory normalcy. The role of the state is revisited periodically as its influence on migration has changed with the political landscape. In some cases, this movement of people transpired for the furthering of the state's power, as was the case with soldiers, and sometimes to disarm gatherings of "roving bands," such as was actuated by 19th Century British policy.[106] The chapters in the *Handbook of the South Asian Diaspora* offer powerful points of perspective that do "redefine the field" as the editors aimed to do, combining to offer a truly comprehensive and rooted understanding of the South Asian diaspora. While, as Brown suggests, "totally descriptive coverage would be impossible,"[107] the impossibility of describing the diaspora in its entirety should not end the pursuit of attempting to describe as many manifestations as possible, "following people's journeys" as Amrith has suggested, especially through ethnographic

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[105] *Ibid., 272*.
[106] *Ibid.,3*.
[107] Brown and MyiLibrary. *Global South Asians*, 172.

research attempting to capture the voices of those in the diaspora themselves. The narratives to come in Chapters Four through Six follow the journeys of people in the India diaspora, attempting to offer more description to fill in the vast void of understanding needed about this large, influential and evolving part of humanity.

"Indian" Diaspora

The study of Indian diaspora has been an area of interest especially within the disciplines of history, anthropology and sociology.[108] This is, in part, due to the magnitude and breadth of the Indian diaspora. The International Migration Report 2017 notes that about half of all international migrants come from twenty countries, and about a third come from just ten countries.[109] The largest diaspora now comes from India, with 16.6 million people rom India living in another country.[110] Calculating such an enormous and amorphous population, much less studying it requires an understanding of the factors that shape its identity. The statistics alone are complicated by the term "Indian," which has been used to describe many political and ethnic groups. An Indian Immigration Report in 2015 describes this diversity well: "From the late 18th Century until 1947, India comprised all the diverse religious and ethnic groups governed directly or indirectly as part of British imperial territory between Afghanistan and Burma (present day Myanmar). This included large and distinct communities of Pakistanis, Punjabis, Bengalis

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[108] Narayana Jayaram. *The Indian Diaspora: Dynamics of Migration*. (New Delhi: Sage Publ., 2004), 11.
[109] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division(2017).InternationalMigrationReport2017:Highlights(ST/ESA/SER.A/404
[110] *Ibid.*

(Bangladeshis), Sinhalese, and Tamils, among others."[111] Hybrid-ethnicities have also been created where migrants have intermingled with natives. Examples of these would include "Punjabi Mexican Californians" and "Gujarati East African."[112] For the purpose of this research, I am using the term "Indian" to refer to those who themselves have immigrated directly from, or who have ancestry originating from the current political boundaries of India. This is the position taken in most recent studies of Indian diaspora.

Admittedly, this is still a very diverse range of people who originate from unique cultural, religious, linguistic and even genetic heritage, and have mingled further with subsequent cultures as they have migrated within and beyond present-day India. According to the Migration Policy Institute, India has established communities on every continent and on islands in both the Pacific and Indian Oceans, as well as in the Caribbean, creating one of the world's most uniquely diverse migration histories.[113] Yet, especially in the case of diaspora groups where the diverse community of "Indians" seem to have key unique cultural, linguistic and religious commonality between them which are often missing or altered in the host culture, it is useful to use the word "Indian" despite the vastness of its implications. In his thorough *Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora*, Brij Lal captures this complex reality concisely:

> The Indian diaspora is large and growing, becoming ever more visible and powerful' but we should be cautious about speaking of the Indian diaspora in the singular. There are, in truth, diasporas of so many kinds—the 'dollar' diaspora of the West and the

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[111] "Immigration to America." Immigration to the United States. Accessed March 7, 2018. http://immigrationtous.net/161-indian-immigration.html.
[112] Aditya Raj. "The Indian Diaspora in North America: The Role of Networks and Associations." *Diaspora Studies* 5.2 (2012): 107-23.
[113] Naujoks, Daniel. "Emigration, Immigration, and Diaspora Relations in India." migrationpolicy.org, March 2, 2017. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/emigration-immigration-and-diaspora-relations-india.

> 'desperate' diaspora in the developing world, those which were formed by the 'brawn' drain and those formed by the 'brain' drain. There are points of convergence and divergence, which influence relationship among members of the diaspora. Certain things bring us together—food, faith, fashion, art and music—and then it does not matter whether you have recently arrived from Surat or are a long-term resident of Surrey or Sydney.[114]

These influences that "bring [them] together," Lal states, include cultural, sociological, family influences, literature, and political influences. These are worth considering in more detail.

Cultural Influences

The presence and publicity of Indian cinema, sports, cuisine and music have been linked with the cohesion of an Indian identity.[115] Social-cultural shaping influences have been effective in many locations where Indian diasporic communities are growing, and serve to generalize an "Indian" identity despite the differences within the diaspora. Lal elaborates,

> The Indian diaspora is constituted of people from different regions of the mother country, and from diverse religions, castes, and occupations. Yet, in spite of these differences, they have managed to develop distinct identities, lifestyles, and thought patterns in the various locations in which they have settled down. In fact, they carry 'Little India' with them: Indian cinema, cuisine, and cricket, along with the technology of the internet, have managed to keep the Indian diaspora.[116]

Indeed, the Internet has played a key role in the propagation of these cultural influences. Businesses and organizations such as Indian restaurants, Bollywood cinema, and cricket

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[114] Brij, Peter Reeves, and Rajesh Rai, eds. "The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora." In *The Enclyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora*, 12–13. (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).
[115] Rini Mehta. "Bollywood, Nation, Globalization: An Incomplete Introduction." In R. Mehta & R. Pandharipande (Eds.), *Bollywood and Globalization: Indian Popular Cinema, Nation, and Diaspora*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010.), 1-14.
[116] Lal, Vinay. "Establishing Roots, Engendering Awareness: A Political History of Asian Indians in the United States." In *Live Like the Banyan Tree: Images of the Indian American Experience*. (Philadelphia, PA: Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, 1999), 42–48.

clubs have websites that are intentionally linked to community sites where those identifying as "Indian" can find pertinent cultural information.

Sociological Influences

Beyond geographical history and cultural similarities, however, there are also sociologically reinforcing influences that contribute to an "Indian" identity. Asian Indians were enumerated into a distinct ethnic minority group in 1980 in the US Census. While some within the diaspora felt positively about this change and were instrumental in helping it come to fruition, some feared the official minority status might bring further oppression or violence to Asian Indians. To combat this, new associations and networks were developed. These are also often advertised through constantly emerging and expanding websites. Irrespective of the artificial clumping together of people groups that could easily be separated by language, custom, geography, and religion in India and in diaspora communities, networks that identify this diaspora as distinctly "Indian" have been maintained despite the diversity of the group. In his research on the role of networks and associations in the Indian diaspora, Aditya Raj states, "These associations are like spatial locations on which ethnic networks are etched, or in which ethnic networks are socially embedded."[117] This is echoed in Bacon's work, where the role of rhetoric used in these networks specifically is listed as contributing to Indian identity and community cohesion.[118] This will become evident through the example of a community walking club

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[117] Aditya Raj. "The Indian Diaspora in North America: The Role of Networks and Associations." *Diaspora Studies* 5.2 (2012): 107-23.
[118] Jean Bacon, and Margaret Abraham. "Life Lines: Community, Family and Assimilation among Asian Indian Immigrants." *International Migration Review* Xxxii.3 (1998): 12.

in Chapter Five. Though it was not intended to be an exclusively Indian club, the walking club described eventually did function as a network for women in the diaspora in the middle class suburb where it occurred. The club was advertised within other public community events such as an Indian Independence parade through which many Indian clubs and groups were publicized. Those joining often said they had only just arrived in the area and had heard that the walking club was a means for Indian women to gather for fitness and friendship. In Chapter Five, the walking club is an example of the hope for contribution to society. Perhaps further research might suggest that other networks and associations are the manifestations of the hope within the diaspora to make a contribution as well.

The Role of Family

Additionally, the role of family has been a critical factor in reaffirming the identity of individuals and groups as "Indian." Ethnically defined neighborhoods historically had been a main contributor to the reinforcement of Indian identity. Even diaspora from suburban homes would visit the urban locales of "Little Indias." However, more recently the family unit has become a source for the diaspora to experience 'Indianness' in America. The family is the context in which "Indian immigrants and their children determine who they are and where they belong."[119] Bacon traces the process of ethnic identity transferring from first to second generation Indian diaspora as evidence of collective ethnic identity, demonstrating that family has a strong role in the formation of

[119] *Ibid., 4*

identity as "Indian."[120] I witnessed this most vividly in one Indian church where many of the congregants were related. The youth sat together emulating the adults with blank books and pens held on laps for taking notes during the service. This church will be also discussed in Chapter Five where I will describe their dedication to service through their monthly outreach to the homeless and the elderly. They also witnessed their parents bringing in Indian speakers to represent ministries that helped others or spread the faith back in India. All of these examples demonstrated Indian Christian ethnicity being transferred from the older generation down to the youth within the context of a church. Stories in Chapter Four regarding the hope for to be accepted are particularly impacted by the role of family generating ideas of Indianness.

Literature as a Window into Indian Identity

The role of literature reflecting and authored by the Indian diaspora has also served in cohering an "Indian" identity. Maxey traces the emergence and influence of this literature in both Britain and America from 1970 through 2010.[121] Tracing the genealogies of this literature from Naipaul, Rushdie, Desani, Kureishi, Mukherjee and many others, Maxey suggests that much of this literature captures the experience, competencies and concerns of diasporic communities in ways that emboldened "Indianness" as a category through themes such as familial relationships and integration challenges.[122]

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[120]Jean Bacon. "Constructing Collective Ethnic Identities: The Case of Second Generation Asian Indians." *Qualitative Sociology* 22, no. 2 (1999): 141-60.
[121] Ruth Maxey. *South Asian Atlantic Literature, 1970-2010*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2012).
[122] *Ibid*.

Literature was often a useful point of connection in conversations that transpired during the course of my research. After reading specific texts recommended to me by interlocutors on health or cuisine, or novels by an Indian authors, I often found that other interlocutors were familiar with the same literature. For example, the book *Almond Eyes, Lotus Feet*, was recommended to me during one interview. After reading it, I attempted some of the recommendations suggested in the book such as scrubbing oneself with besan, or gram flour, as a benefit to the skin. Later, as I walked with the women in the walking group, some members mentioned this practice. They described this as a common practice used for lightening skin tone, which they admitted was an important part of their beauty regime. Familiarity with Indian literature provided windows of understanding practices and perspectives that can impact hope in the diaspora. Narratives in Chapter Four and Six demonstrate this impact, specifically.

Political and Social Dynamics in the Formation of a Sense of "Home" and Indian Identity

The dynamic between host cultures and cultures of origin has often contributed to the formation of diasporic identities. Steve Taylor describes the identification of "home" in Punjabi diaspora in the UK and even globally, for example, as strongly effected by the social dynamics of Punjabis in India. Taylor emphasizes that cultures of origin are not static, and diasporic identities are continually negotiated. Elaborating on this example from Punjabi diaspora, he argues that,

> Increasing divisions between the UK diasporic group studied and the non-migrant permanent residents of Punjab, which are intrinsically related to processes of inclusion and exclusion and the rapidly changing social context of Punjab, especially the changing role and significance of land ownership and changing consumption practices therein, in

> turn connected to the increasing influence of economic neoliberalization and global consumer culture within India, significantly shapes the (re)production of home and identity amongst the Punjabi diaspora.[123]

Attitudes toward cultural assimilation in a host culture can further affect a sense of home, and consequently, of identity. Masud Chand demonstrates this in his analysis of the effect of American and Canadian policies on the attitudes of Indian immigrants with regard to identity and a sense of home. Despite early immigrants fleeing to America from "inhospitable Canada,"[124] Chand suggests that today many members of the Indian diaspora residing in Canada identify as Canadian, rather than "Indian." This is in contrast to Indian diaspora in the US who often identify as Indian, or Asian Indian. Chand attributes this to Canadian attitudes toward the acculturation of the diaspora, which stems from Canada's current willingness to welcome each ethnic group in celebrating its unique identity.[125] America, often being compared to a "melting pot," has historically requested, or even required, the swapping of ethnic expression for expressions of the majority culture. When an ethnic group is stripped of ethnic identity in this way, suggests Chand, the members identify their country of origin as "home" rather than the host country. Since a sense of home is directly related to one's ethnic identity, "Indianness" is often affected by this ability or inability to express identity. Hence, pressures from both inside and outside the diaspora can influence this stripping of identity. In Chapter Four, I will describe the experience of a church hoping for acceptance as their pastor, a second

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[123] Taylor, Steve. "The Diasporic Pursuit of Home and Identity: Dynamic Punjabi Transnationalism." *The Sociological Review* 62, no. 2 (2014): 276–94.
[124] Pal, Sanchari. "Hostility & Heartbreak to Integration: The Saga of Indian Immigration to Canada." The Better India, February 20, 2018. https://www.thebetterindia.com/131622/indian-immigration-canada-story-komagata-maru/.
[125] Masud Chand. "Diasporas, Migration, and Trade: The Indian Diaspora in North America." *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy* 6.4 (2012): 383-96.

generation Indian himself, implemented changes that seemed to threaten the expressions of Indianness from the community. A further narrative in Chapter Four traces the journey of one Indian woman who seems to step out of any connection with Indian diaspora or expressions of her own Indianness, marrying a white man and hoping deeply to gain the acceptance of her white in-laws.

The Indian Diaspora Worldwide

This description of "Indian" identity, then, can serve as the parameters of the category of Indian diaspora. In ten countries there are more than half a million persons of Indian descent, and they represent a significant proportion of the population of those countries. Their industry, enterprise, economic strength, educational standards, and professional skills are widely acknowledged in many of the locations where they have settled. They live in different countries, speak different languages and are engaged in different vocations. What often marks their uniqueness among other populations is their Indian origin, the consciousness of their cultural heritage and their deep attachment to family back in India.[126] These markers of uniqueness were quite prominent among the interlocutors in my research. Discussions about their own reflections upon the assumptions and pressures about these markers coming from within the diaspora, their families back in India and from the majority population permeate the next three chapters.

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[126] *Ibid.*

History, Location and Dynamics of Indian Diaspora

The history of Indian immigration has been diverse and the ramifications of causes of migration leave unique and blatant effect upon pockets of the diaspora. There are, however, several specific identifiable patterns of migration from India.[127] Some of these include students, professionals, siblings and parents of professionals, and non-professionals coming as laborers, taxi drivers or restaurant owners. The impact of the Partition of India and the state of the British Empire over time sent Indians migrating globally with significant levels of trauma and discrimination from hosting countries.[128] In contrast, host countries needing the "brawn" and "brains" of Indian workers not only welcome, but also actively lure immigrants at other times. This variation has deeply influenced the reception immigrants have received in various locations, and many in the Chicago diaspora seemed to be aware of the differences. In fact, because their families were parsed out across the globe in different diaspora groups, some of the interlocutors in my study mentioned their awareness of their middle class status in the US compared to those in lower classes in other diaspora settings. However, even in the most accessible host situations such as the US middle class, there are factors within and without the diaspora that can cause difficulties with assimilation. In Chapter Four, I demonstrate this with the story of "Rupa" who has come to the US as the uneducated wife of a professional and experiences and a sense of acute rejection because she does not fit the stereotype of what Indians are expected to be within the diaspora.

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[127] Om Prakash. Dwivedi. *Tracing the New Indian Diaspora*, xvi.
[128] Lal, Brij V., Peter Reeves, and Rajesh Rai, eds. "The Enclyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora." In *The Enclyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora*, 12–13. (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 314.

Providing a general historical overview, Jayaram, in *Indian Diaspora, Dynamics of Migration,* reiterates the customarily dichotomized phases of emigration out of India.[129] Summarizing these as colonial and post-colonial while acknowledging some overlap, Jayaram provides three patterns of emigration in the post-colonial period: (1) emigrations of Anglo-Indians to Australia and England, (2) emigration of professionals and semi-professionals to the industrially advanced countries like the United States of America, England and Canada, and (3) the emigration of skilled and unskilled laborers to West Asia in the oil boom.[130] The succinct reiteration of these patterns and the dichotomized phases of emigration impelled me to wonder about possible phases of immigration adjustment that might play a dynamic role in the hoping process for those in the Indian diaspora. In the conclusion, I explore the possibility that the three hopes I will discuss in subsequent chapters could be phases of adaptation or assimilation for those in my study.

While the notion of "Indianness" was discussed above, the issue of identity *as a diaspora* is a separate issue. This entails the level at which the diaspora feel they are received and situated among the world populations including majority cultures and other diaspora groups. Noting the proliferation of stigmatic labels from the past despite the elevated social status of many current immigrants from India in many locations, Jayaram highlights that identity formation is still very much in flux for the global Indian diaspora.[131] The role of the diaspora itself in the fluctuating state of identity formation is

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[129] Narayana Jayaram. *The Indian Diaspora: Dynamics of Migration*, 20.
[130] *Ibid.*
[131] *Ibid.*

also recognized, suggesting that there is ambivalence about the presence, power and personality of the diaspora in many groups both by host countries and by the diaspora members themselves. This is a critical issue that I found to be true within the Indian diaspora groups in Chicago; the ways that this significantly affected hope will be discussed in the following three chapters.

Further trends within the Indian diaspora have been researched, culminating in a complex, multi-faceted portrayal of this enormous diaspora and its influences. For example, Dwivedi, in *Tracing the New Indian Diaspora,* offers a description of Pierre Gottschlich's[132] work on trends of political successes within the Indian diaspora. Dwivedi notes Gottschlich's hypothesis that sizeable populations of Indian residents in a host country contribute to the political successes of candidates from the Indian diaspora where that sizeable population upholds their ethnic identity.[133] Maharaj's essay on the rigidity and restrictive behaviors of Indians in South Africa suggests these are connected to the marginalization of the diaspora in that location.[134] Dhanda suggests that the identity choices within second and third generation Dalit communities in Britain provides a window into the liminal position and effect that migration places upon the Indian diaspora. Discussions of the effect of dance performance,[135] arts[136] and materiality[137]

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[132] Gottschlich, Pierre, and Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institut Für Kulturwissenschaftliche Forschung. "Die Indische Diaspora in Den Vereinigten Staaten Von Amerika." 36, no. 1-2 (2016): 159-180.
[133] Om Prakash Dwivedi. *Tracing the New Indian Diaspora*, xix.
[134] *Ibid.*
[135] Kathy Foley. "*Contemporary Indian Dance: New Creative Choreography in India and the Diaspora* by Ketu H. Katrak (review)." *Asian Theatre Journal* 32, no. 2 (2015): 686-686. https://muse.jhu.edu/ (accessed November 23, 2018).
Meera Varghese. "Ascending the Canadian Stage: Dance and Cultural Identity In the Indian Diaspora." Thesis (M.A.)--University of Alberta, 2008.

highlight current trends in the diaspora of India as well. And in van der Veer's *The Modern Spirit of Asia*, we can extrapolate the "betweeness" of all diaspora communities; as India's relationship with the global economy and political situation evolves, so too does that of the diaspora.[138]

Though I will be mentioning more studies specifically in subsequent chapters as they relate to the themes that emerged in my research, this breadth of research is highlighted here to demonstrate that the global Indian diaspora is diverse, evolving and recognized as crucially important as a subject of study in the present age. Much work has been offered and yet a call remains for further research using narratives, focusing on South Asian Christians, the roles of women, and on comparisons across faith traditions.

Indian Diaspora History and Trends in the USA

Indian migrants to the USA are only one portion of the unequaled numbers of immigrants pouring into the US from around the world.

> The United States is still the most popular destination for immigrants. According to the report, the country gained almost 23 million migrants between 1990 and 2013, which was the largest amount in the world. Europe and Asia, on the other hand, are the continents with the majority of international migrants, playing host to almost two-thirds of them.[139]

Harshita Mruthinti,. "Dancing the Divine Female: Diasporic Women's Encounters with the Hindu Goddess through Indian Classical Dance." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 9.3 (2006): 271-99.

[136] Om Prakash Dwivedi. *Tracing the New Indian Diaspora*, xxi.
Rini Mehta, and Rajeshwari Pandharipande. *Bollywood and Globalization : Indian Popular Cinema, Nation, and Diaspora.*

[137] Suvadip Sinha. "Return of the Native: Swades and the Re-thinking of Diaspora." *South Asian Popular Culture* 10.2 (2012): 185-96.

[138] Peter Van Der Veer. *The Modern Spirit of Asia: The Spiritual and the Secular in China and India*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014.

[139] "UN Report: More International Migrants Today than Ever Before." Paragon Relocation, October 6, 2016. https://paragonrelocation.com/un-report-more-international-migrants-today-than-ever.

As of 2015, the Indian diaspora was recognized as a critical factor in the American ethnic, socio-political and cultural make up. The list of the top three countries listed as a source of immigrants to the US includes India. An American Community Survey (ACS) in 2016 demonstrated that more than 43.7 million immigrants resided in the US, which accounted for 13.5 percent of the total population of the US at that time.[140] "The current composition of U.S. immigrants reflects earlier flows: Mexicans, who represent 11.6 million of the 41.3 million foreign born in the United States, remain by far the largest group. In comparison, there are 2 million immigrants from India and 1.8 million from China."[141]

The history of Indians in the United States most often commences with the arrival of Punjabis on the west coast at the turn of the 20th Century, and is closely linked to that of migrants arriving in Canada.[142] Sikh landowners experiencing draught and other groups in India seeking better wages came to the west coast of North America between 1903 and 1908.[143] Due to some new regulations in Canada since their arrival, as well as experiences of discrimination, many of these Punjabis who started out in Canada traveled

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[140] Jie Zong, Jeanne Batalova, and Micayla Burrows. "Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States." migrationpolicy.org, July 10, 2019. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states.

[141] Muzaffar Chishti, Faye Hipsman Muzaffar Chishti, and Faye Hipsman. "In Historic Shift, New Migration Flows from Mexico Fall Below Those from China and India." migrationpolicy.org, March 2, 2017. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/historic-shift-new-migration-flows-mexico-fall-below-those-china-and-india.

[142] Aditya Raj. "The Indian Diaspora in North America: The Role of Networks and Associations." *Diaspora Studies* 5.2 (2012): 107-23.

[143] Brij V Lal, Peter Reeves, and Rajesh Rai, eds. *The Enclyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora*, 328.

south to work in the lumber mills of Washington or in agriculture in California.[144] Being predominantly Sikh, the majority of that first wave of immigrants appeared to be quite a distinct group, clad with silk turbans and the religiously required dagger. The Sikhs' distinctive dress, and that of the Muslims who also came along from the Punjab (both referred by the US natives as "Hindoos,"[145] "ragheads" and the "Hindoo menace"[146]) not only set them apart from the natives, but also from other Asian immigrant groups who came as laborers around the same time.[147]

Though they were successful in their farming or lumbering endeavors, the local society worked politically to place new restrictions to eliminate the presence of the Indian migrants in certain places. These included restrictions on Punjabi men from bringing women into the country to significantly limit the populations of Indian diaspora; men would have to return to India to marry Indian women. Some married Mexican women and a few married local white women, however. US natives continued to work on legislating further limitations on the diaspora, and by 1917, the Immigration Act restricting immigration from the "Asiatic barred zone" was in place.[148] Though the Indian communities organized into groups lobbying for change, in1924, a further Immigration Act limited the number of new immigrants to 2 percent from any country that already had

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[144] Raymond Brady Williams. *Christian Pluralism in the United States: The Indian Immigrant Experience*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11.
[145] I discuss the meaning of this term in more detail in chapter 8.
[146] Rangaswamy, Padma. "Asian Indians in Chicago: Growth and Change in a Model Minority." In *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait,* Melvin Holli and Peter Jones, Eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 440.
[147] Takaki, Ronald, Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans (Boston: Little, Brown, 1989) p 294-5.
[148] Lal, Brij V., Peter Reeves, and Rajesh Rai, eds. "The Enclyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora" 328.

people residing in the US, effectively stopping all immigration from India.[149] By the middle of the century, numbers of Indian immigrants were extremely low.

Eventually, this trend would change, however. The earlier restrictive quotas left only about 1,500 working class persons from India in the US in 1946, but dramatic turn around began in the 1960's.[150] A new Immigration Act in 1965, which abolished national origins quotas, reversed the tide, raising the number of immigrants to 10,000.[151] However, it came with new regulations on the qualifications immigrants must have in order to migrate to America.[152] In contrast to the first wave of Indian immigrants who had been working class farmers and laborers, the requirements for immigrants brought a new wave of Indian diaspora arriving as middle class, educated professionals with degrees and, often, fluent English. Education, professional opportunities and the rise in technological conveniences, which more easily connected one back to India, lured Indians to America during this time.[153] Thus, the majority of Indian migrants in the US are located within the middle or upper middle class. This was the social position of all the participants in my study, and no allusions to limits or discrimination based on class were made during the course of my research.

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[149] U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State. Accessed October 31, 2019. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act.
[150] Ronald Takaki. *Strangers from a Different Shore a History of Asian Americans*. (Boston,Mass.: Little, Brown), 419.
[151] Jean Bacon and Margaret Abraham. "Life Lines: Community, Family and Assimilation among Asian Indian Immigrants," 4.
[152] Raymond Brady Williams. *Christian Pluralism in the United States*, 2.
[153] Rangaswamy, Padma. "Asian Indians in Chicago: Growth and Change in a Model Minority." In *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, 440.

This increase continued exponentially. By 1990, over 450 thousand people born in India resided in the US, with over 800 thousand in the US claiming Indian descent.[154] The Indian diaspora roughly doubled every decade, and in 33 years from 1980 to 2013 increased from 206 thousand to 2.04 million.[155] Per the "August 31, 2017 Spotlight" report from the Migration Policy Institute, there were 2.4 million Indian immigrants in the United States in 2015, making it the second largest immigrant group after Mexican immigrants. Then, the report suggests, Indian immigrants were reported to have surpassed the numbers of Mexicans entering the US in 2016.

> 1.49 million foreign-born individuals moved to the United States, a 7 percent increase from the 1.38 million coming in 2015. India was the leading country of origin, with 175,100 arriving in 2016, followed by 160,200 from China/Hong Kong, 150,400 from Mexico, 54,700 from Cuba, and 46,600 from the Philippines. India and China surpassed Mexico in 2016 as the top origin countries for recent arrivals.[156]

These large groupings of immigrants are comprised of diverse groups themselves. Though those immigrating to America who have met visa requirements of professional qualifications or degrees and have mostly assimilated into the middle class, the immigrants are still varied according to many subcategories such as state of origin/language, perspectives on gender roles and religious affiliation. Relatives of those immigrants who may not have the same qualifications are allowed to accompany those with high degrees and professional skills within the middle class, diversifying the diaspora further.

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[154] Jean Bacon and Margaret Abraham. "Life Lines: Community, Family and Assimilation among Asian Indian Immigrants," 4.
[155] Jie Zong, and Jeanne Batalova "Indian Immigrants in the United States." migrationpolicy.org, November 28, 2017. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/indian-immigrants-united-states.
[156] Jie Zong, Jeanne Batalova, and Micayla Burrows. "Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States." migrationpolicy.org, July 10, 2019. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states#Numbers.

Religious Affiliations in the Indian Diaspora

One of the effects of intensified trends in migration is a growth in religious pluralism both in South Asia as well as in the countries that host the diaspora. Indian immigrants come to host countries from a wide variety of religious faith traditions, and continue to practice those traditions across a vast range of approaches from attempting the most exact replications of the practices once performed in India, to barely recognizable adaptations that offer a brief nod to previous practices. In a 2001 census in India, 80.5 were listed as Hindu, 13.4 were listed as Muslim, 2.3 were listed as Christian, 1.9 were listed as Sikhs, .8 were listed as Buddhists, .4 were listed as Jains, and .7 were listed as "other" or "none listed."[157] The US Government webpage entitled "CIA Factbook" suggests these numbers did not change much by 2011: "Hindu 79.8%, Muslim 14.2%, Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.7%, other and unspecified 2% (2011 est.)"[158] However, those specifically migrating to the US reflect different statistics. The 2012 Pew Research suggested that the Indians residing in America are represented by the following statistics: Hindu 51%, All Christian 18%, Muslim 10%, Sikh 5%, Jain 2% and Unaffiliated 10%.[159] Raymond Brady Williams states, "It is increasingly evident that immigrants are maintaining transnational ties in ways different from the earlier immigrants, demanding new perspectives on the

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[157] Orgi. "Religion." Census of India: Religion. Accessed October 31, 2019. http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/religion.aspx.
[158] "The World Factbook: India." Central Intelligence Agency. Central Intelligence Agency, February 1, 2018. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html.
[159] DeSilver, Drew. "5 Facts about Indian Americans." Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, September 30, 2014. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/09/30/5-facts-about-indian-americans/.

transnational vitality of religions and religious life."[160] In studying the Hindu and Christian Indians, I was seeking to explore the ways the two largest populations of religious Indians in the US described and experienced hope as part of this process of maintaining ties and finding new transnational perspectives. The Hindu and Christian Indians are certainly not two homogenous groups. Hinnells writes that there is "rarely a single entity such as the Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, or Zoroastrian community—there are Gujarati or Bengali movements; diverse branches of the Islamic tradition, and so on. The divisions, be they religious, caste or class, "ethnic," cultural, national may be more significant to the people under discussion than the universalizing "Hinduism," Islam and so forth."[161] These differences were recognized within the participants in my study, and narratives of their lives and faith reflect the diversity within these categories as well. Still, it is useful to differentiate the groups accordingly in order to describe them in broad strokes here.

South Asian Christians in the Diaspora

Jacobsen and Raj offer a list of the many reasons why so few studies consider the Christians from South Asia in diaspora studies.[162] Some of these include issues such as the often-indistinguishable appearance between Christians and Hindus, the lack of interest by western scholars of South Asian religions in Christianity, and the perspective that caste studies are studies of the "real" India, suggesting those outside of Hinduism are peripheral and less important to study. As mentioned above, South Asian Christians are

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[160] Harold Coward et al. *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States*. State University of New York Press, 14-15.
[161] *Ibid.*
[162] Knut Jacobsen. *South Asian Christian Diaspora : Invisible Diaspora in Europe and North America*. (Farnhum, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 3.

extremely diverse in practices and belief. Jacobsen and Raj write, "In terms of ethnic origins, cultural heritage and religious praxis, it is as variegated and diverse as the sub-continent."[163] They continue by explaining that Christian immigrants can have very different religious histories, with some dating back to the first century when St Thomas is believed to have arrived in India, and others being the first generation in the known history of their families claiming a Christian faith.[164] As such, those researching Christians in the diaspora must recognize the complexity and subtleties that arise out of all the differences inherent within this portion of the diaspora. The chapters in Jacobsen and Raj's book capture this complexity, covering South Asian Catholics in France, Tamil Christians in Switzerland, Goan Christians in Portugal and many more in Europe. In North America, they consider a variety of topics including marriage patterns for Indian Christians, the effects on acculturation on Catholics in North America, and the caste experience of Dalits in the northeastern US seaboard. These chapters offer some initial portrayals of Christians in the diaspora. However, Jacobsen and Raj admit, "The scant literature on South Asian Christians in Europe and North America also leads the authors to lament the current situation and indicate areas for further research." Indeed, within *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States,* only one chapter out of twelve is focused on Christians in the diaspora. In this chapter Brady Williams describes several of the denominational distinctions of Christians in Britain, Canada and the US, discusses some major issues they face such as transmitting tradition across generations and language, creating social networks and establishing leadership. He concludes his chapter by conveying the need for further research,

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[163] *Ibid.*
[164] *Ibid.*

> Both the practice and the study of religion, and especially Christianity, developed methods and agencies reflecting migration and ecumenical character of religious groups, but the experience and study of old immigrants did not reveal the same transnational character of religion experienced by new immigrants. This situation calls for new studies of the lived reality and social fields of Christian immigrants and of the vitality of their relationships within and between several societies.[165]

Hence, the narratives to follow answer this call, providing accounts of lived reality and social fields of Christian immigrants along with Hindu immigrants in Chicago.

South Asian Hindus in the Diaspora

While many studies, comparatively, have focused on Hindu immigrants, there is yet much more to learn. Eck writes in her chapter "Negotiating Hindu Identities in America," that the "topography of Hinduism is highly nuanced" in the United States, as it is in India.[166] After describing in rich detail a new temple in New England built by Sri Lankans, she describes the process of identifying and then negotiating Hinduism in the diaspora. Through many examples in the chapter, Eck relays that Hinduism has become something specifically articulated through Hindu groups in the diaspora, and authors in the Hindu communities in the US.[167] Dempsey likewise portrays Sri Lankan Hindus in America in her ethnographic consideration of the Rush Temple, describing the rhythmic interdependence of the Goddess housed there, the main guru and the devotees' devotional community. She demonstrates moments of "humble, yet sacred intersection" at the

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[165] Harold Coward, et al. *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States*, 32.
[166] *Ibid., 223.*
[167] *Ibid., 219-237.*

Temple.[168] Through consideration of hope in the Christian and Hindu Indian diaspora in Chicago, I encountered moments of humble, yet sacred intersection as well.

Assimilation into the US

As mentioned, because of restrictions in the new immigration laws, the majority of the Indians arriving in the US are highly educated and have professional and English skills, holding jobs in technology, engineering, math and science fields.[169] Despite the fact that Indians in the US are the most successful, affluent, educated and professionally skilled of all the recent immigrant groups, the road to acceptance and assimilation[170] of the Indian diaspora into the middle class in the US has been long and, at times, devastating.[171] Stereotypes and misunderstandings by the Americans from those first Indian communities on the west coast can still linger in the minds of some. Historical and present prejudice against people of color in the US can be added, giving rise to actions of violence and discrimination.[172]

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[168] Corinne Dempsey. *The Goddess Lives in Upstate New York : Breaking Convention and Making Home at a North American Hindu Temple*. (Oxford University Press USA), 214.
[169] Jie Zong, and Jeanne Batalova. "Indian Immigrants in the United States." migrationpolicy.org, November 28, 2017. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/indian-immigrants-united-states.
[170] The word "assimilation" is contestable when interpreted as connoting the need to relinquish ethnic expression in order to fully incorporate into a new society. (Guimond, Serge, Pierre De Oliveira, Rodolphe Kamiesjki, and Jim Sidanius. "The Trouble with Assimilation: Social Dominance and the Emergence of Hostility against Immigrants." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 34, no. 6, 2010: 642-50.) However, because the term assimilation entails consideration of the act of negotiation of identity that emerged in this research, I have chosen to use it intentionally here.
[171] Jean Bacon and Margaret Abraham. "Life Lines: Community, Family and Assimilation among Asian Indian Immigrants," 4.
[172] Zahir Janmohamed. "How Indian-Americans Are Becoming More Vocal with Their Reporting of Hate Crimes." *The Economic Times*, March 11, 2018. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nri/visa-and-immigration/how-indian-americans-are-becoming-more-vocal-with-their-reporting-of-hate-crimes/articleshow/63248907.cms.

Several studies have addressed assimilation and adaptation strategies among South Asians in North America. For example, Durriya and Zahid measured behavioral acculturation in first generation South Asians in the US using the "Szapocznik et al. scale" for variables such as gender, religion, spouse's occupation and more. Their findings were particular to these variables, such as those of females with spouses in professional positions. "Among the females, the spouse's prestigious professional jobs may result in their being more involved in interactions with people of the host culture (US)."[173] They continue, "They could more readily learn to use gestures of the host country, and to engage in American related recreational and social activities than individuals engaged in less prestigious occupations." While the behavioral scale confirmed behavioral adaptation such as the usage of gestures, these findings are not entirely consistent with the emotional realities of some in my study who experienced acceptance or rejection regardless of behavioral adaptation. As stated previously, studies have shown correlations between hope and wellbeing. Thus, studying hope as it relates to adaptation and assimilation can be an additional link between assimilation and wellbeing in immigrants. This is consistent with a recent study on the MASALA networks, correlating social networking by South Asians in America with cardiovascular health. The study demonstrated that assimilation into networks can have positive benefits for

[173] Durriya Khairullah, and Zahid Khairullah. "Behavioural Acculturation and Demographic Characteristics of Asian-Indian Immigrants in the United States of America." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 19, no. 1/2 (1999): 57–80.

health.[174] I will mention several other studies on assimilation by South Asians in America in the chapters to come as they directly relate with the narratives in this study.

Experiences and Reports of Discrimination

In 1987, violent acts against Indians were the intent of the "Jersey City Dotbusters." The savage beating and death of Navrode Mody was attributed to racial prejudice. News reports drew attention to the many other unreported acts against Indians that had been taking place, leaving the diaspora community feeling targeted and unsafe. Indians had been arriving into the Jersey City area since 1965, settling there because it was a lower cost option near to New York City. They had been experiencing taunts and acts of discrimination for years but it reached new heights in the 1980's. In an interview, Anthony Cucci, the Jersey City Mayor at the time of the attacks, explained that the Indian immigrants worked very hard and became affluent. He wondered if this was the cause of jealousy and a territorial "animalistic approach" to discrimination resulting in violence and death.[175]

Further, in 2001, the September 11th attacks reignited that sense of impending danger, as Indians were lumped together with other ethnic minorities in the reaction of many Americans to "Muslim terrorists." These events have triggered much reflection on the part of the Indian diaspora community about identity and assimilation. Bhatia draws out

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[174] Namratha Kandula, Andrew Cooper, John Schneider, Kayo Fujimoto, Alka Kanaya, Linda Van Horn, Lawrence Dekoning, and Juned Siddique. "Personal Social Networks and Organizational Affiliation of South Asians in the United States." *BMC Public Health* 18, no. 1 (2018): 1-12.

[175] Michel Marriott. "In Jersey City, Indians Protest Violence." The New York Times. The New York Times, October 12, 1987. https://www.nytimes.com/1987/10/12/nyregion/in-jersey-city-indians-protest-violence.html.

this reality in his descriptions of two members of the Indian diaspora, Ranjit and Neelam.[176] After the events of 9/11, Ranjit and Neelam explained to their neighbors that they have to be more careful; they were concerned that they would experience violence, since they might be categorized as terrorists in the minds of those that would lash out against Muslims. The neighbors of Ranjit and Neelam were confused initially, until it occurred to them that Ranjit and Neelam were Indian. They had considered the couple to be white until that incident. Ranjit and his wife Neelam seemed to do the same. Bhatia writes, "Ranjit makes it clear that during his sixteen years in the US, he had always considered himself as white. Now, in light of the events of 9/11, his racial identification as 'white American' was under scrutiny."[177]

The use of "Muslim" as the categorization of immigrants leading to hindrances in assimilation subsequent to 9/11 is explored in Mattes' work; political strategies wielding the category to undermine the integration of immigrants vary in different locations, but the effects are equivalent. Khyati Joshi, in *New Roots in America's Sacred Ground,* examines issues related to the intersection of religion, race and ethnicity within the Indian diaspora in America. She states, "Indian Americans and other religious minority populations such as Arab Americans are choosing religion as their primary identifier in proportions heretofore unseen. Yet despite the decline of Jim Crow racism, America still needs its 'others,' and despite the flourishing of non-Christian religions, we prefer our

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[176] Om Prakash Dwivedi, *Tracing the New Indian Diaspora*, 142.
[177] *Ibid.*

differences to be visible."[178] Beyond the New Jersey "Dot Buster" and 9/11 World Trade Center catastrophes in New York City, which made headline news nationally and globally, the reality of discrimination experienced by the diaspora community has been pervasive across the US over decades. According to the 2017 NPR report, "Discrimination in America; Experiences and Views of Asian Americans," discrimination has reared its head in many forms: 61% of Asian Americans would say that discrimination is still very much an issue, 25% report that they have experienced discrimination in the workplace or in seeking housing, 18% say that they have experienced discrimination when dealing with the police, 13% report experiencing discrimination when seeking medical attention, and about 33% report suffering offensive racial comments or hearing slurs aimed at them related to ethnicity and race.[179]

Days after the US election of Donald Trump, one of my interlocutors described a moment of hurt and anger as she sat on a plane overhearing a conversation between two people sitting behind her. The conversation entailed some comments regarding the relief the people were evidently feeling that "something was finally going to be done to stop all these brown people from entering [their] country." She explained that in addition to feeling hurt and anger that she had felt before when encountering comments like that in the US, she now felt a new and disturbing sense of fear that made her shake. In harkening back to the study mentioned previously on assimilation and cardiovascular health, it is

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[178] Khyati Joshi. *New Roots in Americas Sacred Ground Religion, Race, and Ethnicity in Indian America*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 2.
[179] "Discrimination in America: Experiences and Views." RWJF, June 12, 2019. https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2017/10/discrimination-in-america--experiences-and-views.html.

clear that researching hope, like the hope to be accepted in Chapter Four, could have critical benefits for the health in the Indian diaspora.

Though open reports of discrimination have been increasing recently, the willingness of those experiencing discriminatory acts or attitudes to report discrimination have been limited in the past for a host of reasons. While the effects are just as traumatic, familiarity with the history of discrimination in India resulting from the caste system in some cases and religious conflict in others may "normalize" discrimination in the minds of the Indian diaspora. Further, the psychological effects of being a post-colonial community may be connected to the lack of communication about discrimination against the Indian diaspora community, as some may not believe that the authorities will value them enough to help.[180] A further reason that this discrimination has not been as publically known is that Asian communities in the US have been labeled as a "model minority" in the 1960's.[181] While African Americans were protesting and seeking equal treatment and rights, and Hispanic groups suffered other discrimination due to language and ethnic prejudice, the Asian diaspora sought to keep their distance from these groups. Over time, their academic and financial achievements, their professional qualifications, knowledge of English and their desire to function in society without protesting past or present discrimination earned the "model minority" stereotype, one that came with a mixture of privilege and pressure. Where prejudices against the "poor and wretched

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[180] Arpana Inman, Pratyusha Tummala-Narra, Anju Kaduvettoor-Davidson, Alvin Alvarez, and Christine Yeh. "Perceptions of Race-Based Discrimination Among First-Generation Asian Indians in the United States." *The Counseling Psychologist* 43, no. 2 (2015): 217-47.
[181] Padma Rangaswamy. "Asian Indians in Chicago: Growth and Change in a Model Minority." In *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait,* 438.

immigrant" did not apply to the "new" immigrants coming from India into affluent suburban neighborhoods, the threat of a higher or more privileged minority status can be seen as precariously hanging on their reputation for being a non-protesting group; reporting acts of discrimination, therefore, comes at a potential cost.

Another area of concern for experiences of discrimination for those in the Indian diaspora has been caste-based issues. While cases of caste-based discrimination are becoming more recognized as more Dalits arrive in the eastern seaboard of the US since the time of my research,[182] such cases are complex issues to research. Even within India, caste based discrimination is far more complex than those in the West might assume. Because India is extremely diverse with many subcultures stemming from various histories and geographical influences, caste relationships vary broadly from region to region. Even surnames that connote a caste in one area might connote a different caste in another. When this complex conglomeration of relationships is then transported into a context such as the US where the majority culture is not structured or even aware of some of the differences that connote caste, other concerns regarding discrimination become far more prominent and accessible for research. Many in the second and third generation diaspora may only realize the name of their family caste with little comprehension about the history, social limitations and relational connotations that this might mean in some areas of India today or in the past. Further, because those in the diaspora are aware that those in the West are often looking for caste-based discrimination cases, they are quick to deny or

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[182] Knut Jacobsen. *South Asian Christian Diaspora : Invisible Diaspora in Europe and North America*. (Farnhum, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 235.

silence those topics.[183] One participant specifically explained that in his 30+ years in the US, no one has ever asked about caste unless it has to do with hiring priests in some Hindu temples or arranging a marriage. Further, no one has mentioned their own caste, knowing that it is an almost a forbidden topic within the diaspora. Jacobsen and Raj, in their study investigating caste discrimination, in New York and New Jersey where there is a small presence of Dalits, admit, "This fact is not advertised in the churches themselves, and I did not attempt to do much interviewing of lay members." Unless the subjects overtly mention caste background or experiences, ethnical concerns arise about addressing it as a researcher. Sebastian, in his article about the multifaceted nature of identity construction for Dalits in the diaspora, references this issue as voiced by McDermott.[184] He writes,

> She points out the dilemma facing many of those from Dalit backgrounds in the United States as to whether one's Dalit identity should be affirmed or hidden, spoken about or silence maintained, and asks as to whether wishful thinking that caste does not matter or exist in the new reality is real or imagined, especially in the context where one encounters new found freedoms that can be celebrated. Could this be compromised if the Dalit problematic were reintroduced into the equation?[185]

In my 18 months of research, participants never revealed their caste background to me, nor did they relay any experiences of being discriminated against, nor of having issues with others based on caste. Given the sensitivity of this topic, I did not inquire specifically about caste or experiences of caste-based discrimination.

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[183] This may be why caste issues were never brought up with me in any of my fieldwork, nor did I feel comfortable asking anyone what their caste was or how they felt about it. I will not identify the caste as part of the descriptions of anyone in the ethnographic accounts to come.

[184] J. Jayakiran Sebastian, 'Wandering Arameans? Interrogating Identity in a Diasporic Society: Dalitness in Indian Hyphenated Americans." *Exchang, 45,* no. 1 (2016): 21-37.

[185] Anand Veeraraj and Rachel Fell McDermott (eds.), *Pilgrims at the Crossroads: Asian Indian Christians at the North American Frontier*, Castro Valley CA: Institute for the Study of Asian American Christianity and Bangalore: Center for Contemporary Christianity, 2009, 84-109.

Discrimination was mentioned by the interlocutors in my study, however, based on state or region of origin differences, and between those of different religions. With Hindu temples often catering to visitors from specific regions based on the Gods served within, those congregating for religious holidays are often segregated by region. When I inquired generally if she knew of any discrimination in the Chicago diaspora based on caste, one participant mentioned that she never experienced someone joining or avoiding a group due to caste differences. Rather, she did experience those from the north of India preferring to be with others from the north, and mostly only those of the same faith tradition. Further, there were subtle experiences of discrimination described to me, such as those who worked full time excluding those who chose to stay home to raise their children. As demonstrated in Rupa's story, there were painful experiences of exclusion based on the performance of children and based on academic or professional success within the diaspora. These were the issues that reoccurred most readily and regularly in my research.

The context of the Indian diaspora in the US, then, is complex. Assimilation has been possible to a certain extent in the US, but has also been hindered by history and discrimination. The placement of the Indian diaspora between, on the one had, its own history in India with the caste system and periodic political and religious conflict and, on the other, its present position in America as an educated, professional, successful and affluent minority group amongst other minority groups with far different status levels

creates a unique process and reality that deeply affects its identity and its relationship to hope.

Indian Diaspora in Chicago

In the July 2014 RAD Diaspora Profile report of Indian Diaspora in the United States, New York is listed as the metropolitan area with the largest population of Indian diaspora (300,000) followed by Chicago, Illinois (120,000) and San Jose and Los Angeles, California (80,000-85,000 each). Since my own research was concentrated in some key areas of metropolitan Chicago, I turn now to a history and description of the Asian Indian community in that location.

In the introductory essay on ethnic life in Chicago within the edited volume, *Ethnic Chicago, A Multicultural Portrait*, Holli and Jones set the stage for the greater ethnic realities in Chicago. They argue that the city cannot simply be labeled a "melting pot" of ethnicity, nor described as solely exhibiting "cultural pluralism." Instead, they underscore that the history of Chicago involves both of these dynamics historically, with groups such as the Irish, the Germans, the Italians and many more melting slightly into what was once "Checagou,[186]" the location of at least twenty-one major (native) "Indian" villages before the European invasion. Yet, they suggest, many have not melted entirely, but left a mark in one way or another, such as the Germans affecting the Chicago Symphony, or the Irish dominating Chicago politics. As time has marched on, Holli and Jones remind us, it is the Asians who now come to make their own mark:

[186] Meaning "stinky leek or onion" in Algonquin.

> Ethnic history in Chicago goes on, as it must. The latest news concerns the Asian Americans. The fastest growing minority in the United States, doubling over the last decade (to 7.3 million), Asians comprise the American nation at large: Chinese, Japanese, Asian Indians, Filipinos, Koreans, Vietnamese, Laotians, Thais, Cambodians, Hmong, Pakistanis and Indonesians. Many are highly skilled and college educated and possess a hard-work ethic that theorist Max Weber associated with Protestant northern Europeans.[187]

As the third largest city in the US after New York and Los Angeles, Chicago has an extensive immigration history.[188] Inhabitants who had initially come as fur traders and as easterners who had wandered west founded it, in 1833. By 1847, it had grown beyond 4,000 people.[189] At that time the united tribes of natives (Potawatami, Chippewa and Ottawa nation) remaining after bloody battles, surrendered all their land east of the Mississippi river in exchange for five million acres west of the Missouri River, though many of the treaties were not honored. Many French Indians went with them.[190] Chicago sits along Lake Michigan, part of one of the key waterways in the US, making access to this location one of the main reasons why it was so desirable. With New York and California being key coastal locations, Chicago stands out as the major urban center of the mid-western United States. Though it began with about 350 inhabitants, according to the World Population Review, as of 2019, there are 2.7 million inhabitants.[191]

Thus, Chicago has always been a city of immigrants and ethnic morphing; immigration has drastically spiked, though, in recent years. According to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2017 report, "In the 2000-2015 period, immigrant populations in Midwest

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[187] Melvin Holli and Peter Jones. *A Multicultural Portrait*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 3.
[188] The 200 Largest Cities in the United States by Population 2019. Accessed October 31, 2019. http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/.
[189] Melvin Holli and Peter Jones. *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*. 2007, 19.
[190] Melvin Holli and Peter. Jones. *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, 48.
[191] "Chicago, Illinois Population 2019." Chicago, Illinois Population 2019 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs). Accessed December 1, 2019. http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/chicago-population/.

metro areas rose by more than one million persons or 34.5 percent.[192] Immigration accounts for at least a quarter of population growth, being responsible for 1 in 7 residents in Chicago (1 in 8 is a native born citizen with at least one immigrant parent).[193] By contrast, there has been a native population loss of people ages 35-44 years during that time period.

At 38.2% of the immigrant population, Mexico is the greatest source of immigrants in Chicagoland, followed by India for 8.1%, Poland for 7% and the Philippines for 5%. In 2010, there were 188,228 Indian diaspora in IL, most of which were in the metropolitan Chicago area.[194] The population of Indian diaspora in Chicago is a substantial example of how the immigrant population is increasing. According to Bacon, "The swelling population of Asian Indians in Chicago and its suburbs exemplifies a growing trend among current immigrants, particularly the increasingly large percentage from Asia."[195] Bacon continues, "In the 1990 census, those identifying their race as Asian Indian comprised about nine-tenths of one percent of the Chicago area's total population (Cook and DuPage Counties).[196]

Though the initial influx of Indians into Chicago immigrated into the city, most arriving since the 1990's have moved directly into the suburbs as part of the middle class. Lal

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[192] Chicago Council on Global Affairs. "Immigration a Demographic Lifeline in Midwestern Metros." Chicago Council on Global Affairs, March 23, 2017. https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/publication/immigration-demographic-lifeline-midwestern-metros.
[193] *Ibid.*
[194] "Immigrants in Illinois." American Immigration Council, May 9, 2018. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-illinois.
[195] Jean Bacon and Margaret Abraham. "Life Lines: Community, Family and Assimilation among Asian Indian Immigrants," 3.
[196] *Ibid*.

states, the "first major influx of Indians into Chicago awaited the arrival of graduate students and professionals eligible under the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. As with many other immigrant groups, the men arrived first, followed some years later by their families."[197] This continued over decades until the present, when immigrants often skip the city altogether, moving directly to the suburbs where they live in affluent neighborhoods.[198] "These posts-1965 immigrant professionals have options in terms of living arrangements that were not feasible for the majority of their immigrant predecessors."[199] Rangaswamy provides a thorough overview of this trend in *Namaste America: Indian Immigrants in an American Metropolis,* noting that "Between 1960 and 1980, Chicago witnessed a more than 30 percent decline in the number of middle- and upper-income families while suburban Cook County saw a 30 percent increase in families in the same categories."[200] Those who move out to the suburbs have often returned to the city for shopping and restaurants historically, though the trend is changing as more businesses catering to Indians expand into the suburbs. Migration Policy Institute's "2008 Twenty-Frist Century Gateways: Immigrants in Suburban America" states, "New trends in immigrant settlement patterns are changing communities across the United States. The traditional American story of immigrant enclaves in the heart of major cities has been fundamentally altered with the restructuring of the US economy, the

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[197] Lal, Brij V., Peter Reeves, and Rajesh Rai, eds. "The Enclyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora", 410.
[198] Dan Mihalopoulos, and Jon Yates. "Indian Immigrants Flock to Suburbs to Fill High-Tech Jobs." chicagotribune.com, August 28, 2018. https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2001-05-29-0105290239-story.html.
[199] Jean Bacon and Margaret Abraham. "Life Lines: Community, Family and Assimilation among Asian Indian Immigrants," 3.
[200] Padma Rangaswamy. *Namasté America: Indian Immigrants in an American Metropolis*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 90.

decentralization of cities, and the growth of the suburbs as major employment centers."[201] It continues, "Another new immigrant settlement trend—one taking place wholly within metropolitan areas—was the dramatic increase in suburban settlement of immigrants that began in the 1990's. As the urban economy has shifted from manufacturing to new-economy services, the suburbs have become the preferred location for dispersed commercial and office space."[202]

Another cause of Asian Indian diaspora spreading around the greater Chicago suburban area is that companies have relocated to suburban areas where they cater to the desires of professional Indian immigrants preferring to live in reputable middle class school districts found there. This characterized the companies of many of the interlocutors in IT in my study. According to a 2001 Chicago Tribune article about the presence of tech jobs being the cause of more Asian immigration:

> A major factor in Asian immigration to the suburbs is the expansion of a federal program granting temporary work permits to highly skilled workers such as computer software engineers. Responding to lobbying from the high-tech sector, the federal government recently increased the number of temporary work visas issued each year from 65,000 in 1997 to 195,000 this year. Almost 43 percent of the visas have gone to Indians, according to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. High-tech companies say they must import talented workers because they cannot find enough Americans with advanced technical know-how.[203]

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[201] Susan Hardwick, and Caroline Brettell. "Twenty-First Century Gateways: Immigrants in Suburban America." migrationpolicy.org, March 2, 2017. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/twenty-first-century-gateways-immigrants-suburban-america.
[202] *Ibid.*
[203] Dan Mihalopoulos, and Jon Yates. "Indian Immigrants Flock to Suburbs to Fill High-Tech Jobs." chicagotribune.com, August 28, 2018. https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2001-05-29-0105290239-story.html.

Hence, tech jobs are not only largely contributing to Indian immigration to the US and Chicago, but also to the phenomenon of immigrants moving directly into middle class suburban areas rather than urban settings.

Further, retail and restaurant businesses serving the Indian immigrants that were once only available in the "Little India" sections of the city are now plentiful in the suburbs. In the past few years, large commercial complexes for Indian cuisine and clothing have opened. The Mall of India, the largest Indian mall in America housing Indian services, jewelry stores, clothing stores, cinema, beauty salons, and more planned to open in 2019 in a prominent Chicago suburb. The advertisement reads:

> MoI offers dining options to suit any taste (especially Indian taste), including more than two dozen sit-down restaurants, a food court and snacks. It also offers all of your favorites all under one roof. Spend a day at MoI exploring numerous options we have for all shopping needs. Our wide selection of retail, dining, and entertainment venues offer sales and promotions throughout the year.[204]

In referring to this mall, Christine Jeffries, a president for a suburban development partnership, suggested that the invitation for businesses to come to the area has been quite intentional. "If we go back even a decade or more ago, we really saw demographics changing in the community, with a larger Indian population and a larger and growing Asian population. Part of our pitch to businesses coming here is the fact we do have very robust infrastructure for foreign residents."[205]

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[204] Mall of India. "About Mall of India - Naperville, Illinois." Mall of India. Accessed October 31, 2019. http://www.mallofindia.us/about-mall-of-india.html.
[205] Erin Hegarty. "Naperville's Growing Asian Population Draws New Businesses to Long-Vacant Spots." chicagotribune.com. Chicago Tribune, May 16, 2019. https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/naperville-sun/ct-nvs-india-mall-patel-grocery-st-0401-20180331-story.html.

Thus, in Chicago itself and in the larger metropolitan area, evidence of Indian culture abounds, in all its diversity of language, dance, music, and specialty businesses catering especially the needs of the Indian community such as calling plans to India, travel agencies with special deals to India, cable or satellite packages with plentiful movie channels in Tamil, Hindi, Bengali, Malayalam, and more. Indian restaurants, vegetarian and non-vegetarian, are increasingly available, with some specific to Indian sub-groups and some fused with other ethno-culinary expressions. Bollywood and other Indian-produced movies are shown alongside the more mainstream Hollywood productions at local theatres. Holidays, such as Holi and Diwali, that had been generally unknown to the broader populations in America outside of Indian communities are now, not only known but celebrated by masses of multi-ethnic groups. For example, the city of Naperville, a western suburb of Chicago, partially funds the Festival of Colors every year in the downtown area of Naperville in conjunction with the Vedic Cultural Society. This Holi celebration is for the public at large, equally enjoyed by non-Indian and Indian Chicago residents who come to eat Indian cuisine, receive henna designs printed by local vendors and buy and throw paints and powdered colors as a part of this spring celebration. More and more suburbs, schools and organizations host celebrations such as these, and they are attended by a variety of other ethnic groups.

Smaller shopping areas with imported food, clothing and other wares are spread out among the Chicago suburbs, and there is still a concentrated “Little India” section of Chicago as well, that was established with the earlier urban-settling Indian immigrants. Lal describes it this way:

> A section of Devon Street, near the northwestern suburbs, provides a glimpse of Indian life. Indian restaurants proliferate, as do Indian grocery stores, boutiques, and jewelry shops. Here, as elsewhere in the Indian diaspora, commercial Hindi films are extremely popular and may well be the element that cements Chicago's diverse Indian population into a more cohesive identity.[206]

Bacon takes this even further,

> Visit Devon Avenue in the East Rogers Park section of the far north side Chicago, and you will see sari palaces, groceries well stock with Indian delicacies, and electronics emporia offering the latest videos from Bollywood (as Indian's Bombay-centered movie industry is known.) In fact, marking the Indian community's coming of age as a player in Chicago's turf-bound politics, this conspicuous thoroughfare was renamed Gandhi-Marg at a city-sponsored ceremony in 1991. [207]

This specific portion of Devon is in the more complex context of a street that is further segmented by the presence of Pakistani Muslims and Orthodox Jews. In a brief study regarding the relationship of these two other groups, Melzer suggests an explanation of how these groups came to be located in such close, but never intermingling proximity.[208] Between them, the Indian population described by Bacon is still present, but seems to be dwindling by comparison to these other groups, especially as immigrants to Chicagoland have been headed more directly to the suburbs in recent decades.

One need only search "Indian event Chicago" on the internet to pull up and view the extensive lists of events, classes, associations and places of worship available for the Indian community in Chicago and its suburbs. In 1995, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, "an organization that advocates pride in Hindu culture and the political ascendancy of

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[206] Brij Lal, Peter Reeves, and Rajesh Rai, eds. "The Enclyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora," 410.
[207] Jean Bacon and Margaret Abraham. "Life Lines: Community, Family and Assimilation among Asian Indian Immigrants," 3.
[208] Jessie Meltzer,. "Sharing Devon: The 'Coexistence' of Pakistani Muslims and Orthodox Jews." Medium. Religion, Ethnicity, and Race in Chicago, March 21, 2015. https://medium.com/religion-ethnicity-and-race-in-chicago-neighborhoo/sharing-devon-the-coexistence-of-pakistani-muslims-and-orthodox-jews-e506a7d41463.

Hinduism," published a pamphlet listing 70 associations in the Chicago area.[209] Reiff, in the Encyclopedia of Chicago, states, "Several Hindu temples serve the Hindu community; there are two Gurudwaras for Sikhs and one major Jain temple; and Indian Muslims frequent several mosques. Indian Christians and Zoroastrians (Parsis) are also well organized."[210] Clearly, Indians in Chicago have been productive, organized and successful, finding ways to build community, meet their specialized needs and celebrate culture authentically. Bacon comments, "Dispersed throughout the suburbs with other middle-class people of varying backgrounds and interests, these immigrants from India and their families have one thing in common with many of their native-born neighbors: they are all busy constructing identities to alleviate a sense of isolation and to connect with some type of a "community."[211] The chapters to follow will offer several examples of such communities, including a walking club, small groups meeting to speak in shared languages, churches and gathering of local groups for specific religious holidays.

Though the Indian diaspora can be found all over the Chicagoland area including suburbs in all directions, there are a few locations beyond the city itself with higher populations of Indian residents. These tend to be relatively affluent middle class or upper middle class areas. Some examples include Naperville and Aurora in the west, Schaumberg in the northwest and Skokie and Glenview in the north. In 1991, about one third of the Indians in Chicago were Gujarati-speaking, with the next largest linguistic group being the 18%

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[209] Janice Reiff, Ann Durkin. Keating, and James Grossman. "Indians" in *Encyclopedia of Chicago*. (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 2005), 410.
[210] *Ibid*.
[211] Jean Bacon and Margaret Abraham. "Life Lines: Community, Family and Assimilation among Asian Indian Immigrants," 3.

who spoke Hindi. Beyond that, many languages of India are represented within the range of 2 and 9%. However, within more specific areas in Chicago, certain languages might be represented as greater than these percentages. For example, though Kannada and Bengali both were listed as 4% and 5% respectively, the Kannada and Bengali-speaking individuals with whom I often met who seemed to find many local friends with whom they shared their languages.

Specific Settings Described

Confidentiality and Descriptions

Having just provided the contextual overview Indian Diaspora in the US and in Chicago, I will now summarize the three groups or settings where I conducted my research. All the subsequent ethnographic description to follow has come from one of these three groups or settings. To preserve anonymity, I have changed the names of individuals that were specifically mentioned and altered details that might identify them without compromising the integrity of their disclosures. The locations of groups and their demographics have been altered as necessary also.

Research Group #1: Hindu Communities around the Western Suburbs

Temples

Though there are many Hindu Temples in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs, they were not particularly key to my research with the Hindu community. This was because most of my Hindu informants suggested that the worship they conducted in their homes

was of far greater import to them personally, and visiting the temples was something they rarely did. However, I felt it was still important to include a small time visiting the temples in case other Hindus felt differently from those with which I was in more regular contact. I visited four temples, which provided a variety of worship opportunities, ranging from emphasis on specific manifestations of deities, or *murtis*, (such as those predominant in a particular part of India) to more generally accommodating the wider net of Hindu worship preferences and needs. During these visits, I often sat with one or two others on the floor along the wall inside a part of the temple, praying, listening and watching. On a few occasions, I accepted the offer of a temple tour or sat in the cafeteria where others met to talk and eat before or after their worship activities. I observed some specific religious events that were celebrated with symbolic and social ritual activity on a few occasions.

Community Involvement

The majority of my time with the Hindu communities in Chicago was spent in large community events, in local clubs and in personal meetings with individuals. For 12 of the 18 months of my research, I participated in a local walking club in the middle class suburbs. This club began with the vision of two Indian Hindu women who wanted to create an empowering group that would facilitate the physical health goals of women in the area. They hoped that the group would include dedicated women from multi-cultural backgrounds. Women involved were required to meet specific goals walking independently during the week, and were held accountable by submitting photo-collages of their walks including a screen-shot of distance/steps walked per day which were then uploaded to a group site where sub-leaders would note if goals were being met. I found

this to be an excellent opportunity to experience first hand the process of watching the hope of the group leaders unfold. I also gained access to a window into the hopes of individual walkers as they uploaded personal photo-collages of their walks with comments, and to have rich weekly conversations with individual women as I embodied this activity along side them. The group included about 100 middle class Indian Hindu women at the time I joined. When individuals did not meet the requirements of steps and collages, they were demoted into less demanding groups, eventually being eliminated from the walking club altogether when they could not meet the standards of the least demanding group. This was the eventual cause of my own dismissal from the group after 12 months walking with them; I was unable to continually satisfy the requirements of uploading photo-collages that was necessary to remain in the group.

The walking group leaders held a ball to celebrate St Valentine's Day. I attended this ball, and there I met a woman who offered to teach me Hindi privately as her husband's visa did not allow her to be employed, and she desired to contribute somehow to their community. After months of meeting with her regularly, she invited me to attend her baby-shower, as she was due to give birth to her son soon. Many of my Hindi lessons merged into discussions about her hopes as a mother-to-be. She regularly requested birth and parenting advice so her child could have the best chance at the life she hoped for him. Around this time, her husband was required to enter a lottery to obtain a Diversity Immigrant Visa[212] and was not selected. This brought further conversations about hope as

[212] "The Immigration Act of 1990 established the Diversity Visa program, usually referred to as the visa lottery, making available 55,000 immigrant visas starting in fiscal year 1995. Individuals who may apply for a Diversity Visa are selected by a computerized random drawing."

the family had to quickly determine where they would relocate just one month after the birth of their child. I will discuss more about the group and this woman, whom I have called "Shanta," in Chapter Five.

I met many other Hindu women in various social venues around the middle class suburbs of Chicago. There were women watching sporting events or were waiting to pick up their children from local classes or clubs who spoke with me casually about work, community events, family, and sometimes about hope. I met one woman, whom I will describe in Chapter Four, in an Indian grocery shop. She was shocked that I, as a non-Indian, would be shopping there for food. After expressing her disbelief that I would be able to cook with the ingredients I had selected and inquiring about my intentions for using them, she took my contact information and asked if we could meet at a later date. That was the beginning of many conversations with her about hope as she understood and experienced the phenomenon. These and many more similar conversations are a large part of the basis of the data I gathered and will be drawing upon in the chapters to come.

Personal Relationships

Lastly, I was also able to explore the phenomenon of hope by interviewing and continuing to spend time with people I had already known in the Hindu faith tradition. From the time of my arrival in Chicago in 2005, I have been involved in clubs that

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"Eliminate Visa Lottery." Numbers USA, July 30, 2019. https://www.numbersusa.com/solutions/eliminate-visa-lottery#Inelig.

entailed many middle class Indian Hindu women, some of whom have become good friends. My interactions with these friends was part of the motivation for my studying Indian Hindus as part of my research on hope, so continuing to discuss hope with them seemed a natural and important part of the study. There were two women in particular with whom I spent hours talking through issues related to hope on a deeply personal level including themes surrounding acceptance, marriage, friendship, relations still in India, expectations and pressures in the diaspora community, faith and religious celebration, issues related to marriage or ethnic issues related to their state of origin, raising children and aging. These conversations brought a complementary depth that the data from the breadth of social events and superficial interaction lacked.

Research Group #2: Indian Christian Churches and Individuals

Conservative South Indian Christian Congregation

There are many Indian Christian churches around the Chicagoland area. Like the temples, these range from specific (language or denomination) to general (adhering to Biblical doctrine and practice in a broader sense). I visited four churches, but spent the most time at two English-speaking churches. One of these was denominationally specific including a dress code (women covered their heads and everyone wore formal clothing); they had a theology that was constantly manifest in the terminology and practices of each service. This was a middle class Protestant congregation of almost entirely Malayalis, or people with ancestry in the state of Kerala, in southern India where Christianity has a long history of practice. Many people in this congregation were related both to people within

the church and to the same families back in Kerala. They were also intimately connected with a number of ministries in India where individuals were meeting the social and spiritual needs of communities all over the country. These individuals would come to the church to speak regularly, explaining their ministries and their financial and other needs, in expectation that the churches they visited in the US might support them. Chapter Five, on the hope to make a contribution, contains accounts of hope in this congregation.

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The second church was one of the oldest Indian churches in Chicago. As such, the leadership and members were not as particular with theology and doctrine because this church was established to meet the spiritual needs of a variety of Indian Christians years before the greater influx of Indians arrived in Chicago, providing the numbers that would create denominational or language-oriented groups. Beginning in a home as a prayer group, this church initially inflated to the point of needing to incorporate as a Christian church and finding a building where they could meet. After about 10 years, however, the church began to decline in numbers as denominational groups developed and people left to be more with the theologically- or language-specific groups. The remainder pressed on as a middle class, English-speaking and more generally "Biblical Christian" church, though aligning with a Protestant denomination in ways that are not apparent in weekly worship. Their language is not "churchy" or doctrine-filled. The congregants wear what they wish, with the older generation being more formally clad in saris for women and dress clothes for men, and the younger generation in western casual clothes, such as jeans. This was relevant in terms of the hopes of the congregation: to be an internationally accepting and diverse Christian church. What transpired here in the time

of my research was a critical clash of perspectives of how this hope was interpreted between the pastor, the other leaders and the church congregation. Issues of family, tradition and faith came to a painful climax of reevaluation that revealed the risk as well as the gift of hope. These will be explored further in Chapter Four.

Other Christian Informants

Though not an official group as such, I will include some pertinent ethnographical description from Indian Christians I came to know around the Chicagoland area in the 18 months I was conducting research. These individuals were not from these two sites just described. I met them at local school events or at other Christian churches. I will not describe them in detail in this chapter, but they did offer important insights to the research, and so will be mentioned later in the thesis.

Research Group #3: Community Resource Center for South Asians in Chicago and Satsang

Community Center

For the past 20 years, a Center has been available in the "Little India" section of Chicago for South Asians to receive many services offered to accommodate their needs in the city. Unlike all the other sites that were based on the middle class Indian diaspora, this site included people that spanned classes from very poor needing services to wealthy visitors who simply enjoyed visiting the Center. From after school tutoring and ESL lessons, to office services such as copying and free Wi-Fi, to women's meetings and a free cup of

chai, the Center successfully has not only met these needs but also created a kind of community, or home away from home for many Indians and Pakistanis who live in this part of the city and beyond. It began with a committee desiring to assist and serve this diaspora group, many who were Indian diaspora them selves. It is supported by government grants, and by churches that believe reaching out in this way is important. For years, it offered these services and Bible studies to Hindus and Muslims, seeing many of them visit once and never return when they heard any kind of direct preaching about Jesus. Though they appreciated the services, they did not connect with whatever form of presentation about Jesus was being offered through talks as such. I had heard of this Center in Chicago but had not chosen it as a potential research site until I realized the strategic and unique manner in which it bridged the Indian Hindu and Christian communities. I will discuss this Center and related issues such as power differentials in the groups in Chapter Five.

Satsang Community

As mentioned in the introduction, I was invited to attend an inculturated[213] Hindu-Christian service in the suburban home of "Thomas." There I met a number of people from the Community Resource Center for Asians just described. A man named "Anil" was leading the service. He sat wearing an orange robe on the floor. As is the case often with Hindu priests, he wore a band on his arm and *tripundra* (white, horizontal lines) on his forehead. The blowing of a conch shell began the service. The setting was quite

[213] Those holding the service described this service as "inculturated," meaning that they intentionally attempted to situate Christian theology in the context and through media that were familiar to those with Hindu backgrounds including the use of symbols, sacred items, language use, music and rhythm and flow of service.

reminiscent of worship in a Hindu temple, with songs sung to harmonium and tabla accompaniment, and spiritual stories being shared as everyone sat on the floor. However, the lyrics in the songbooks were about Jesus rather than Ram or Krishna; the stories were from the Bible rather than writings traditionally associated with Hindu history, lore or worship. These were Christians worshiping Jesus in a style more traditionally found in Hindu settings in the contextualized style promoted by Paul Hiebert.[214] I realized that evening that this "inculturated" worship was taking place daily in the Community Resource Center in Chicago. The leaders invited me to visit the center, and eventually to regularly participate in the service at whatever level I found helpful. I visited the site bi-weekly for 18 months, often attending a worship service, and then staying on to discuss it afterwards with attendees, or to interview the leaders privately. I also began to study Hindi with one leader, as he taught many newcomers Hindi, and Sanskrit as his schedule allowed. We spoke about his motivations and dreams for the worship services and for building up more leaders to replicate his role in other settings. About 12 months into my time at the Center, Anil introduced me to a man who was about to launch another site for this kind of worship community in the suburbs of Chicago, meeting just once a month initially. I also attended these services about 6 times over the course of my research where I would sing, pray, read and eat with the Hindus and Christians who attended. From these sites I accessed another vista of hopes within the Indian diaspora community that I will describe in upcoming chapters.

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[214] Paul Hiebert. "Critical Contextualization." *Missiology: An International Review* 12, no. 3 (1984): 287-96.

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided a context for the Indian diaspora in Chicago including the groups in my research. This chapter has aimed to demonstrate how the Indian diaspora has a long and complex history that has had profound effects on the evolution of its ever-changing identity and position in the world. From the causes of migration to the influences on its identity from within and without, to social-political realities that have shaped it gradually, and, at times, traumatically, the Indian diaspora has certainly had ample opportunity for hope to be necessary and to arise. The three hope groups described in the suburbs where I often met members of the Indian diaspora were clearly affected by these historical and socio-cultural influences. Studying hope provided a window into the effects of this background information. Echoes of some of the realities from this contextual information will resound in the ethnographic data to follow, whether it pertains to jobs and visas, community organization and cohesion, entertainment, religion or discrimination. In this chapter I have also provided an initial overview of the specific locations or groups in which I conducted my ethnographic research from which the narratives in the following chapters emerged.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Hope to be Accepted

Acceptance is a vague concept. It offers potential movement in so many directions. While the plethora of application possibilities might threaten to make it a meaningless category, I found the repetition and presence of hoping to be accepted so common among the Indian diaspora groups and individuals through various distinct expressions that it presented itself clearly as the first of the three categories of hope emerging in my study. It is quite possible that hoping for acceptance would emerge as critical in other or even all human groups. I found it particularly interesting as a point of concern within the Indian diaspora groups, since acceptance in environments of Indian migration has not always been readily experienced. It would be very interesting to compare whether or not hope to be accepted would be at the forefront of research with other diaspora groups in particular. Indeed, it might help answer questions about whether ethnicity is a contributor to the presence of this hope. For the purposes of my research, though, I offer a description of this hope without attempting to suggest that ethnicity is causal in the formation of these hopes. Instead, I aim to offer a window into the reality of the individuals and groups within the Indian diaspora in Chicago recognizing that the hope for acceptance was prominent, and it entailed a kind of dance or balancing act where the individuals and groups had to negotiate many influences and often experienced many emotions, thoughts and decisions in the process.

At times, individuals or groups sought acceptance from the majority population, at other times from within the diaspora population, at still other times within marriages or families, and sometimes from a deity. The hope to be accepted sometimes was aimed in

the future (as in "I hope that one day I can be more acceptable") and sometimes in the present moment ("Can he/she/they accept me right now?") In all cases, the hope for acceptance included a journey that entailed the collision of things previously mentioned such as losses and desires, the past and the future, etc. It also entailed the act of reflection upon the hope and a limited sense of agency. In this chapter, I will give evidence of these varying expressions. Beginning with the journey of "Deepa" to find acceptance and meaning from the majority culture, I will describe her process of hoping as she worked through a dating relationship and eventual marriage into a white American family. Next, I will describe the journey of an Indian Christian congregation that hoped to move beyond the limitations of their Indian ethnicity to become an International church relevant to any people groups who wanted to worship Jesus. Thirdly, I will revisit the story of "Rupa," whose initial interview was discussed in Chapter Two, demonstrating her deep desire for acceptance within the diaspora community, or alternatively, from those outside the diaspora who would accept her. Finally, I will briefly examine the ways in which "Jyoti," a Gujarati Hindu woman, and "Dave," a Tamil Christian man, both hoped for acceptance from family, from the society around them and from their God. Through these descriptions and stories, I aim to demonstrate that the hope to be accepted is a central manifestation of hope within the Indian diaspora in Chicago.

"Deepa"

It was only her first name that gave me a hint that "Deepa" might be part of the Indian diaspora in Chicago. Her demeanor, her style of clothing, her accent and the topics about which one finds oneself conversing with Deepa seemed to communicate nothing ethnically specific beyond "mid-western American." Her rather typically white surname

combined with her shoulder length, loosely warn hair that was highlighted blond, and her very fair skin tone added further confusion about what her ethnicity might entail. Smedley refers to such phenotypic properties as markers of race in his article on the health consequences for those who experience racism, suggesting that exhibiting "non-white" traits has been correlated with negative health such as breast cancer or high blood pressure.[215] Clearly, for reasons unknown to me, Deepa was choosing to avoid such markers of race. I met her at a planning meeting for a children's event in the suburbs of Chicago. Since most individuals in the Indian diaspora with whom I was interacting seemed happy to speak about their Indian ethnicity, I asked her about the origin of her first name. She briefly stated that she was born in India but had been here since her teen years. At present, she was the mother of three and a medical doctor; these were the identity markers that were clearly more comfortable to speak about than her Indian origin. Throughout our time on the planning committee and beyond, we spoke of many things such as raising children in the suburbs, our busy schedules, schools, activities and her medical practice.

Several months after meeting Deepa, I hosted a party at my home in celebration of a traditionally Hindu holiday, and I invited her. Though she did not wish to attend, she offered to have her own mother cater the event, and Deepa even suggested that she deliver the food herself. Her mother would cook the food in a suburb 45 minutes away. Deepa would drive there and pick up the food, and then drop it at my home. She was

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[215] Audrey Smedley. ""Race" and the Construction of Human Identity." *American Anthropologist* 100, no. 3 (1998): 690-702.

happy to do this, she suggested, for just the cost of the ingredients with no charge for her mother's effort or the delivery. Her mother cooked regularly for a local temple, she told me. Deepa did not often visit the temple, however. She identified Christianity as her current faith tradition but did not say much more about it at that time.

When Deepa arrived with the food, she found me struggling with the tying of my sari. She rather uncomfortably suggested that she help me retie it, admitting that she had not worn nor tied one in a very long time. We struggled together to get it retied and then she left quickly before the party began. I found it interesting that she bothered to assist me with the food and the sari in this way, though obviously denying participation herself in the event or the traditional attire. She seemed stressed or slightly annoyed to be involved, and yet still strangely drawn to it, willing to generously sacrifice time and effort for the party.

After the event, there was a rather large amount of poori, a deep-fried bread, left over. My own son, who had come to know Deepa's son, enjoyed this bread and almost single-handedly ate the remaining 20 or so pieces left over. The next time I saw Deepa in the community, I mentioned how much my son loved her mother's poori. He had eaten poori on many occasions, but never enjoyed it as much. Deepa seemed unmoved to hear about this, but suggested that the next time her brother visited her mother, perhaps he could bring some poori back with him, since he lived near to her. Within the week, I received a text from Deepa requesting that I meet her brother in a nearby parking lot at a specific time. I was a bit confused about the meaning of this meeting, but agreed to be at the

location. When I pulled in, I saw a man sitting in a van with his window lowered. As I pulled closer, he asked if I was Deepa's friend. When I confirmed that I was her friend, he handed me an enormous bag of freshly cooked poori. He said it was for my son, and then he drove off.

While the ambivalence apparent in Deepa's interactions with me with regard to situations involving Indian ethnicity was troubling personally as I wished to be sensitive, her tendencies toward avoidance and forbearance echoed the responses of participants who took part in Inman et al's 2015 study of race-based discrimination among Asian Indians in the US.[216]. The descriptions of coping resulting from this study fit Deepa well. After contextualizing the Asian Indian immigrant experience much the same way I have provided in Chapter Three on the social, cultural and historical context of Indian diaspora, Inman et al. explain how previous historical influences such as the caste system and colonial rule in India have effected the ways in which especially first generation Asian Indians cope with discrimination in the US. Coping mechanisms are directly linked in this study with perceptions of the factors influencing experiences of discrimination. These influencing factors include physical appearance, professional status, personal behaviors of Indians and levels of acculturation. According to the study, believing that discrimination is tied to these factors, the Asian Indians in the US can cope by making choices about these factors such as changing appearance to blend in with western style, learning to talk about and participate in same activities that majority culture members talk about and do, interacting beyond ethnic groups, rising to successful and respected levels

[216] Arpana Inman, et al. "Perceptions of Race-Based Discrimination Among First-Generation Asian Indians in the United States." *The Counseling Psychologist*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2015, pp. 217–247.

in education and occupations, and by ignoring or minimizing any suggestions of ethnic discrimination. Deepa had not alluded to experiences of discrimination in any way initially. Still, though I did not know the motivations behind Deepa's choices, she had successfully, and possibly inadvertently, managed all of these factors. Within the context of Indian diaspora in Chicago, Deepa had obscured her ethnicity beyond any other members that I had met, whether she had intended to or simply had made decisions out of personal choice. It occurred to me that she had obscured her Indian ethnicity so thoroughly, that perhaps she had managed to escape discrimination altogether. But then I learned more of her story.

About a year after meeting Deepa, she invited me to bring my children to a high status country club where she, as a member, often brought her children to swim. She insisted on paying the entrance fee for my family as her personal guests, and then directed my children toward the snack bar, suggesting that they order whatever they wanted and put it on her bill. I was unable to reciprocate her generosity on this level, which created an odd sense of financial disparity between us. We sat watching the children swim and she suddenly started to tell me about her marriage and in-laws. I was finally able to understand that Deepa's ambivalence may not be a reaction to socio-cultural factors or personal preference, but also possibly could reflect the management of personal pain in her daily realty. It began in medical school. Deepa dated her white boyfriend for about 3 years and the relationship was enjoyable and strong. She believed. However, one day her boyfriend admitted that he was concerned that they were getting too emotionally connected. He confessed that she was a lovely girl to date, but certainly not to marry.

After all, though she was fair and had blond highlights in her hair, she would probably eliminate the chance for him to father naturally blond-haired, blue-eyed children as he had always anticipated. Their closeness was starting to threaten his plan. Deepa told this story with an emotional distance, neither offering much facial expression nor vocal range. Perhaps my exasperated response to the report of her husband's apparent racism seemed uncomfortable or dramatic in comparison with her own; as she continued, Deepa became apologetic and reassuring in her tone. She continued to explain that they had broken off the relationship, but he re-approached her shortly afterwards saying that he regretted his decision and that he missed her. Deepa consented to reengage the relationship if they would marry soon, instead of dating. She determinedly said that she was not going to waste any more time with him if he was still uncertain. They married shortly afterwards, and he has confirmed since then that he knew he made an excellent choice in marrying her. His family, however, was still not convinced. Her Indian Hindu family, her brown eyes and her lack of familiarity with some Midwestern American traditions or cultural references (such as eating ham for a Christmas meal or knowing famous lyrics referenced in colloquial dialogue from songs of previous generations) were annoying to them. This lack of familiarity all confirmed her inadequacy in their eyes. They thought it was useful and necessary to inform her of this often. Deepa contrasted this treatment with that of her husband's sister who has no education nor credentials but was treated as the "family princess who could do no wrong." Still with flat affect, Deepa stated that she continues to seek their acceptance of her children and her marriage, but little progress has been made over the years.

Though jarring to me, Deepa's detached disposition during this retelling of this discrimination seems to be somewhat typical within the diaspora. In Corinne Dempsey's *The Goddess that Lives in Upstate New York*, Dempsey provides a window into the same kind of discrimination that is tolerated by the Tamil immigrants that regularly visit the temple where she does research. She describes the ease with which the visitors share their stories of discrimination.

> Accounts of racism cut across the generations, yet they seem to flow with particular ease and poignancy when young adult devotees describe their North American grade school experiences. While listening to these accounts, I found myself alternately disturbed by their uniformity—it seems no one was immune from childhood cruelty—and in awe of each storyteller's sense of equanimity. Without watering down their memories of their pain, all seemed to have come to terms with their imperfect society.[217]

While continuing to hope for acceptance from the majority culture and from her own extended family has been important for Deepa, maintaining acceptance from her family of origin has not been as critical for her. One way she has demonstrated this is through the abandoning of her family's Hindu faith tradition. Since a teenager, Deepa recalls feeling disconnected and disinterested while worshipping her family gods. She stated that she engaged out of family obligation and respect for her parents, who were quite religious. Once in college and medical school, her studies became her sole focus, and she did not engage in any faith practice except for occasional times of meditation. Though her (then) boyfriend claimed to be Lutheran, he shared her total lack of interest in practicing religion. His family seemed to want to carry on the tradition of being Lutheran culturally without necessarily holding to any beliefs or behavioral enactment of the faith.

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[217] Corinne Dempsey, and American Council of Learned Societies. *The Goddess Lives in Upstate New York : Breaking Convention and Making Home at a North American Hindu Temple*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 170.

So when Deepa had completed her schooling and was employed as a doctor in a practice where several of the other physicians claimed to be Christians acknowledging openly that they read Bibles regularly, Deepa was confused by this more intense commitment to belief and practice by people claiming to be Christian. She began to ask questions. The other doctors suggested that she attend a local Bible study if she wished to learn more about the Bible. Despite countering the faith of her family of origin, Deepa pursued this suggestion. After some months of study, she felt that the Bible answered her questions and desires for meaning. When I asked her specifically if she had any images or symbols of hope, Deepa showed me a digital image of the Bible that she had printed to present at the interview.

I wondered if Deepa's conversion to Christianity might be another attempt to become acceptable to the family of her husband. Whether or not it was ever motivated by that desire is hard to measure, but its effect is clear. Her husband's family was actually irritated that she had become more religious in any faith tradition, even if in their own. Honoring their unspoken pact of being culturally named Christian while believing and practicing nothing beyond a vague deism was the key to becoming more acceptable to them. Deepa violated that pact by caring too much about Jesus and the Bible. Clearly, her faith choices did not move her into the position of greater acceptance whether that hope motived her faith choice or not.

It was through this confluence of events that I understood Deepa's hope to be accepted as one of a journey that entailed losses and gains along a continuum. On one hand, the

shedding of the South Asian diaspora community and the apparent lack of acceptance of her own otherness could be viewed as losses Deepa was willing to take in exchange for the hope of acceptance from the majority culture. This might be a challenged assumption by Grace Poore, however, who wrestles with the commodification of ethnic identity by some who use it for the purpose of acceptance by those who might see it as exotic otherness. "In a country like the United States," Poore writes, " where capitalism intersects with so-called race awareness, exploiting third world cultures, and spiritualties pass for ethnic chic or multicultural liberalism."[218] Could Deepa's decision to pursue acceptance outside of her original ethnicity be viewed as a courageous stand against such exploitation of ethnicity? Deepa's ambivalence seemed to suggest to me that she was holding both positions in tension, especially as she knew that I was particularly interested in Indian diaspora experiences. I was a trigger, in a sense, with which she had to contend as she balanced out her past with her present, culminating in the spaces of middle class suburban life in Chicagoland with her present situation of marriage into a white, unaccepting family. Hoping for acceptance was that high wire of risk and uncertainty. I was triggering something uncomfortable for her, by having her mother cater the food for the event I held associated with the Hindu tradition, delivering the food herself, helping me tie my sari, and by asking her brother to bring my son more Indian bread. However, she lavished treats upon my family by inviting us to her exclusive club and letting my kids order whatever snacks they wished. She let me interview her about topics that were sensitive, and she confided in me the shocking story of her husband's previous attitudes

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[218] Grace Poore. "The Language of Identity." In Shamita Das Dasgupta. *A Patchwork Shawl: Chronicles of South Asian Women in America*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2002), 27.

and his family's blatant prejudice. Through my interest and questions regarding Indian diaspora experiences that forced a focus on an area of her life that she had tried to ignore, I was a threat of sorts.

An Indian Christian Congregation ("ICC")

The balancing of the hope to be accepted from the majority culture with the hope to be accepted from the diaspora community is not just challenging for individuals. Groups have to strategically negotiate these often-conflicting hopes as well. This was evident in the time I spent within one Indian Christian church in the Chicagoland area, which I will refer to as "ICC." This church was started in the home of a local pastor in 1968 as a prayer group. Five years later, they incorporated as a church, installing the first pastor officially, who served for three years. The church continued to grow, and the following pastor started classes for children and groups for young adults. At that time, there were not many Indians living in Chicago so the church used English in the services rather than a language specific to Indian diaspora from one particular state or region of India, allowing any Indian diaspora members to attend. This "generally Indian" Christian culture was far more fluid and diverse then the Indian churches that have sprung up in Chicagoland in the following 30 years, which cater to specific groups, languages and denominations that became more plentiful in the area after 1965. Though the middle class church underwent trials and challenges during certain seasons, it carried on with its mission of serving Indians of any background who were interested in learning about and worshipping Jesus. A few non-Indians also worshipped in the church over the years, and ICC's vision began to shift from being inclusive of all Indian groups to inclusive of all

ethnic groups. For about ten years a white pastor led the congregation, and, in 2010, they changed their name, replacing the word "Indian" with the word "International."

Many of the members had been a part of the church since its beginning (as first generation immigrants) or since birth (the second generation young adults). As such, the church had a unique blend of voices that shaped its vision and leadership. The combination of this trans-generational diversity with their new international focus gave the church a unique perspective in becoming multi-cultural at a time when many other churches were only beginning to ask questions about the value of such multi-cultural exposure and interaction. The church offered outreaches directed at an area nearby known for being inhabited by immigrants from a wide variety of nations. ICC intentionally tried to incorporate a few people of other ethnicities into their leadership and worship band. Rather than selecting specific aspects of an Indian ethnicity to express intentionally, the congregation hoped to reject an aggregated ethnicity, and focused on developing a multi-cultural adherence. Though they still were largely an Indian congregation, their dreams of being a place of worship for Christian believers from all parts of the world was growing strong; the hope for acceptance as a congregation to the wider society was increasing.

About a year before I began my research at this church, their pastor felt a calling to pursue other ministry options. Though the church had not hired a new pastor, they had secured an interim pastor from a local Indian church who was willing to fill the role until they hired a permanent pastor. This was the person leading the church when I began my

research. Sharp and energetic, he echoed the welcoming response that I received from the congregation to attend the church whenever I was able along with my family. On first visit, I was invited downstairs for lunch after the service, which is available free of charge every week for anyone wishing to stay. As I sat eating the falafel and rice that they had ordered, many members of the church approached me with suggestions for succeeding in my research. One offered me access to his online literature collection. Another recommended a book that I should read, and shared information about the local author. These lunch visits became a constant reminder of how accepting this congregation was to visitors and guests of any ethnicity, a place excited about learning and sharing with all.

About 6 months after I started to attend, a new pastor was hired. He was a young, second generation Indian himself, with an international vision that seemed to mirror the passionate vision of the church. However, as the months passed, there was a noticeable change in the pastor and the congregation. A kind of distance or coldness started to permeate the culture of the church. Where smiling and chatter characterized the minutes before the service began a few months before, now solemn faces and hushed voices took their place. Fewer people greeted me after the service, instead having quiet conversations in closed small groups. I tried to inquire about the change during the lunch gatherings after services, but the topic was quickly changed or simply ignored. One particular older couple had heard my questions and noticed my confusion. They invited me to their home for lunch one day, and there explained their perspective of what had been transpiring.

Up until this point, the hope to be accepted seemed confined to their group hope that the local people from within the internationally populated suburban area in which the church was located would find their church acceptable as a place to worship, and would enjoy community there. While they had originated as a church for Indian diaspora, the critical element of their identity had evolved over time, now centering around their Christian mission to reach people of all nations, with their ethnic Indian origin seemly irrelevant except with regard to it being one out of many international expressions of ethnicity. In returning to the chasm metaphor, this congregation, through the slow unfolding of their vision and their hiring of their new pastor, was taking its first steps across the chasm from where they had been, an exclusively Indian church, to where they desired to be, a multi-ethnic congregation. This multi-ethnic, or "international" expression of faith was desired as an extension of a vision taken from the Biblical texts regarding nations worshipping together in this life and in the life to come.[219] Further, it was considered a testimony to the unity of Christians, demonstrating that "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."[220]

They had not given much thought to the expression of their Indian ethnicity as part of the ethos or practice of the church until this new pastor arrived, immediately attempting to implement his strong opinions about the relationship between ethnic and faith expression. In Miles-Watson's description of Christianity in Shimla, India, he offers the distinction that some Christian leaders (such as Stokes) encultrate Christianity within an ethnic

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[219] For example, "All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name." Psalm 86:9, New International Version.
[220] From Galatians 3:28 New International Version.

expression that corresponds with those whom they are trying to reach in India, while others (such as Singh) maintain their native ethnicity while advocating their Christian faith and are found more interesting by westerners because of it.[221] He states, "If Stokes represents the European dream of Christianity being reinvigorated by contact with India, then Singh represents the equally European dream of India being transformed by contact with Christianity."[222] For some, then, the desired aim is to transform culture through application of religious perspective and practice, whereas for others, displaying faith through a particular ethnic lens can have an appeal, and perhaps help the message to be acceptable to those who encounter it. The pastor had communicated his perspective that the unmeasured or even intermittent expressions of Indian ethnicity were not going to be a point of attraction for people of other ethnicities. In hoping that the church would be welcoming, rather, he believed that most expressions of Indian ethnicity would need to be removed from the congregation.

In response to this, conversations about the inherent value of Indian ethnicity began to arise, including both the intrinsic value and the possible missional value of such expression. Up until this point, individuals displayed "Indian ethnicity" according to personal preference in varying degrees. Some felt comfortable wearing Indian attire, and in referencing Indian cultural activities. Others wore western clothes and discussed the relative success of professional baseball teams. Along with the English songs, they occasionally sang a song in Hindi or Tamil or Spanish.

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[221] Miles-Watson, Jonathan. "Pipe Organs Andsatsang: Contemporary Worship in Shimlas Colonial Churches." *Culture and Religion* 14, no. 2 (2013): 204–22.
[222] *Ibid.*

As the pastor sought to eliminate expressions of Indian ethnicity, though, some within the church began to consider whether intentionally harnessing Indian ethnicity to attract those curious about "eastern" spirituality could be advantageous. These individuals had experienced the complexity of those in the West accepting ameliorated practices associated with the East, if presented appropriately. In fact, a local man and his wife were not interested in attending anything called "church," having been raised by parents who embraced a combination of agnosticism and Buddhism. However, the couple did attend the church's retreat located at a nearby camp because they were fascinated by a group of Indians talking about spirituality in a neutral environment. This caused some in the church to realize that there might be value in their Indian ethnic expression with regard to their vision of becoming international. Altglas, in *From Yoga to Kabbalah,* provides a cultural and historical overview of manifestations of Hindu and Kabbalah worship in Europe and America, and explains that these have not become available through individual processes of picking and mixing traditions.[223] Rather, she explains, "It is only under certain circumstances and through processes of idealization, universalization and de-contextualization that these resources are domesticated and become 'available' for bricolage in Euroamerican societies."[224] The members of ICC wanted to make their place of worship as attractive and accessible as possible. Would their Indianness be a point of attraction or repulsion for the greater community, they wondered. Was there, as Altglas suggested, any idealization of eastern ethnicity that could be interesting, rather than

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[223] Véronique Altglas. *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 58.
[224] *Ibid.*

alienating for visitors? What would bricolage entail in their situation? With the pastor suggesting otherwise, this congregation had to discern the best option for their congregation for displaying cultural influences on faith. Long meetings and heated discussions ensued. Their desire to become internationally relevant, or appealing to the wider community that was comprised of people from many ethnicities, fueled the hope that others would find their congregation a place open to any expression of ethnicity, including their own. They began to doubt, however, if this desire was even possible to attain; their congregation felt as though it was being ripped apart.

These varied perspectives on Indian ethnic expression were particularly striking because they were not divided along generational lines. Often, research has considered the collective ethnic identity of Indian diaspora within each generation only. Bacon helps synthesize perspectives on collective ethnic identity of Indian diaspora by initially contrasting first and second immigrant perspectives, and then showing how they can be viewed as a whole.[225] Suggesting that much of the research on Indian ethnic identity had been focused on what individual ethnic identity entails, Bacon researched the ways in which collective identity in particular is constructed. She initially delineates one view that suggests second generation groups make choices about performing some "American" ethnic attributes while "the core of one's self is to remain Indian." Upon considering this view, I had wondered if the generation would be split with regard to the desire of expressing Indian ethnicity in this church. The older couple that had invited me to lunch

[225] Jean Bacon. "Constructing Collective Ethnic Identities: The Case of Second Generation Asian Indians," 141–160.

explained that the church was in great turmoil because of the way that the new pastor was suggesting the international vision was not possible if the church did not undergo some major changes immediately. First, according to this couple, the pastor suggested that no expression of Indian culture be allowed which included the wearing of Indian apparel, ordering Indian food within the rotation of lunches provided after church, or leading songs in any language native to India. The couple stated that other ethnicities were certainly welcome to be expressed, perhaps as an attempt to counter-balance the large presence of Indians in the congregation. Secondly, the couple explained that the pastor had mandated the cessation of a Bible study that had been taking place for 5 years or more, mostly including the older members of the congregation. The leader of the Bible Study group, an older Indian man who travelled especially from the city out to the suburbs each week to teach this group of committed friends, was viewed by the new pastor as threat to the vision of the church because of the influence he had with the older generation. Finally, the couple told me that the pastor suggested it would actually be in the best interest of the church if all the older members left completely, and perhaps started their own church.

Eventually I learned that many others in the congregation seemed to have experienced the confluence of events much as the older couple had narrated regardless of age or status as first or generation immigrants. I was not able to interview the pastor himself, but I did speak with a former member of the church who considered himself a good friend of the pastor. After asserting that he deeply respects the pastor and had anticipated that the pastor would have been a strategic leader for the church initially, he continued,

> Looking back, I think he may have had too many assumptions and too little patience in a church that is open to change, but still does value their cultural identity and heritage. I know he walked into the church wanting to make changes that he felt would make the church more appealing to people from any background. The church just didn't trust him enough to change who they are at the drop of a hat. This is where [ICC] is different than many Indian churches where the pastor is the unquestioned boss. The Indian church in the USA is a bit like the Wild West with lots of people angling for political influence and little to no denominational oversight, but that's a different conversation.

This is consistent with Penny Edgell Becker's description of conflict within Hope Episcopal Church, which she came to view as an "identity conflict."[226] She states, "Identity conflicts involve both power and symbols; they can be understood as conflicts over the power to symbolize different understandings of the congregation's identity and to institutionalize these understandings in very concrete ways."[227] Ethnicity could be viewed as a symbol of identity for this congregation, and was integral to their conflict.

The friend of the pastor continued by speaking to the specifics of all the changes the pastor had attempted to make. "I know he thought the Indian songs were simply low quality and not in line with the type of service he envisioned." He confirmed that the church often ordered a variety of ethnic food, but seriously doubted that the pastor would eliminate Indian cuisine from the rotation. "I expect," he continued, "he may have encouraged them to stop wearing Indian clothes, though, for the Gospel." The above description of "lots of people angling for influence" may have also pertained to the many directions in which the hope for acceptance was splayed. Those in the church wanted not only to be acceptable to this pastor and the international community, but to God by being willing to make sacrifices "for the Gospel." Yet they were split in their sense of betrayal

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[226] Penny Edgell Becker. *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[227] *Ibid., 4-5.*

and mistrust due to the personal and confusing nature of the ethnic sacrifices of identity they were being asked to make, as well as by the suggestion that the older generation should leave the church.

The conversations and meetings that were taking place those months when the culture was shifting from warm and excited to cold and distant were filled with pain and division. There were some of the second generation who agreed with the pastor and believed that the hope to be accepted by the younger generation of the international community could only transpire if the older people left. More of them, however, felt a keen allegiance to their parents or other "aunties" and "uncles" who had been with them since birth as a part of the church. It deeply hurt them to imagine the older generation being asked to depart. The older generation was also split. Some wanted to be acceptable to the pastor and the younger generation through their compliance and sacrificial willingness to follow the leadership of the church, so they willingly left. Others, however, felt that the pastor was wrong, and that the hope of being acceptable as a church congregation to the wider community included being whole, not splintered according to age. The ending of the Bible study also caused much pain. The older people who had been attending this valued study had been committed to learning and growing weekly for years. The accusation that this was somehow undermining the vision of the church was also painful and confusing. Most confusing of all, however, for the entire group was the question of their own expression of ethnicity that had been unexamined in depth until this point. Suddenly, they were being asked if their Christian identity could or should require the total denial of their Indian ethnicity. They were being asked if they could be acceptable to a world

around them if they were "too Indian." They were being asked, by a second generation Indian pastor, ultimately about their identity as a group with regard to their ethnicity and their faith, and if they were willing to adapt that for their hope of acceptance in a multi-cultural context.

Bacon communicates that the stereotype of the immigrant being stuck between two worlds that pit one's ethnicity against American culture is not accurate, especially for second-generation immigrant.[228] She suggests that the second generation solves issues with ethnic fusion by finding his or her own way through the world; what enables the second generation to formulate collective identity in today's world is the ability to marry the creative, solution-orientation of the modern environment in which they have been raised with traditions and perspectives consistent with older Indian immigrants. It was interesting that in this trans-generational congregation, rather than pitting the expressions of Indian ethnicity against "multicultural" or "international" Christianity as the pastor was suggesting (ironically, second generation himself), eventually the congregation collectively expressed identity through returning to their focus on faith, rather than ethnicity. They ultimately believed that, other than eliminating the word "Indian" from the name of the church, ethnic expression should be left to the individual's choice. Like the second generation in Bacon's study, they creatively applied solutions to their unique issues as first and second-generation Indian diaspora combined.

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[228] Jean Bacon. Bacon, Jean. "Constructing Collective Ethnic Identities: The Case of Second Generation Asian Indians," 141-60.

Baumann suggests, in *Contesting Culture; Discourses of Identity in Multi-ethnic London*, that "negotiations of culture and community form part of what anthropologists conceive culture to be: a process of making and remaking collective sense of changing social facts, rather than some reified possession."[229] As a community, ICC had to reassess and renegotiate all their previously held assumptions about the mission and practice of the church as a means of "making sense" of all that had happened since the pastor was hired. As a result, they asked the pastor to step down and they led the church into a time of healing and re-visioning. Their hope to be accepted by the larger international community was set aside for a time while they sought the acceptance of one another, and from God, for the previous few months where voices had been raised and things said that had caused pain between them.

A few months after the pastor left, I attended a retreat for this church during which they wept and prayed through all that had transpired as a congregation with regard to this sense of rejection due to their ethnicity, age and other issues. The retreat was focused upon a book by Peter Scazzero, entitled *The Emotionally Healthy Church*.[230] Through this retreat, the congregation was able to reflect on all that had happened, and to process difficulties such as the guilt the younger generation felt for considering the pastor's suggestion that they should ask the older generation to leave the church, and the guilt of the older generation for remaining even when they were asked to depart for the sake of the Gospel. They discussed painful losses such as long standing members of the church

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[229] Gerd Baumann. *Contesting Culture: Discourses of Identity in Multi-Ethnic London*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 189.
[230] Peter Scazzero and Warren Bird. *The Emotionally Healthy Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.

including old friends and family members no longer attending. They admitted feeling desultory without a leader, and disheartened because God seemed to be taking quite a long time in providing one to bind their flock together. In subtle ways, questions about the possibility of maintaining the vision to be multi-ethnic or international arose. The uncertainty and discomfort of many was palpable. Yet, these were held in a tension with other realities that were quite the opposite. In the midst of mourning the losses of relationship, tears of gratitude were shed between the members that processed these losses, admitting that they held each other in deep esteem as they weathered this together. Words of forgiveness and empathy passed between those attending the retreat. As guilt and doubt were acknowledged, faith and excitement about the reimagined vision seemed to neutralize the pain, and the congregation seemed to find its emotional and missional footing once again. The joy I had encountered when I first arrived at the church seemed to be restored. Their hope to make a difference in the international community around them would continue.

Hope for acceptance in this community was definitely a journey across a chasm of contradictions. Losses of ethnicity, of family connections and of leadership were held in balance with dreams of multi-cultural community, wholeness and the security of a leader marching them towards their vision. Fears of the older generation hindering the church's vision clashed with fears of the young who still wished for the presence and wisdom of the elders. The older generation felt the pain of being seen as irrelevant or even an obstacle. Guilt and uncertainly challenged faith and belief that God would take care of this congregation even if they were hurting one another, or if they asked the leader that

God provided to step down. They were actively engaged in the process of hoping and yet feeling overwhelmingly that much was out of their control. Yet, the desire to please God, to love one another and to further the Gospel kept them on the tightrope crossing the chasm of hope. And in the space and time that I shared with this church, they reflected upon their struggles while also depending on the God they loved.

"Rupa"

Parts of Rupa's story have already been explicated in Chapter One through the description of her photo-elicitation interview. There, she had openly shared about her loneliness, her past academic struggles, the sexual abuse she suffered in India, and her present awkward reality of attempting to earn a High School diploma as part of the extremely educated and professional middle class Indian diaspora in Chicago. Still, she carried on with her classes, believing that better days would come. Her children, whom Rupa called "her pride," also struggled academically, which created further rifts between her and other Indian mothers who shared stories regularly of their children advancing through gifted programs and winning chess tournaments, as well as music, speech and math competitions. Yet, Rupa willingly allowed her family to be splintered across continents so that her daughter could attend a special school that could meet her academic needs, gaining the best possible chance for a successful future. Despite the academic struggles of her young son at home, she advised him to "be positive," believing that they would eventually address his educational needs as well. It was astounding to me that Rupa could continually exude the level of hope that seemed present in her disposition.

Hope has been viewed by some, such as Kierkegaard and Spinoza, as dangerous or irrational. In a study on risks and uncertainly, Zinn argues the opposite however. Suggesting that a particular kind of logic is employed in "in-between" situations, Zinn demonstrates that emotional strategies can be functional and wisely chosen to navigate through these uncertainties.[231] These include strategies such as intuition, trust and hope. Zinn suggests that despite the rationalist perspective that divides responses of uncertainty into either rational or non-rational, strategies such as trust and hope "harness resources of tacit or experimental forms of knowledge rather than expert knowledge or scientific expertise." These, Zinn states, are actually efficient ways to deal with risk and uncertainty, and are reasonable. "Hope or faith can be mobilized to take high risks for a better future or to cope with unknown or daunting futures."[232]

Rupa's extraordinary hope to be accepted, according to Zinn, can be thus viewed. On almost every front, she was reminded that she was not quite acceptable among the middle class Indian women of the diaspora. This was confirmed in Rupa's estimation by the fact that she had only two friends and neither of them seemed to be able to ever find time to get together with her. She tried to meet people at events and was friendly, but even when she was able to engage with people who were willing to give her their phone numbers, no one seemed to return her calls. Rather than being "irrational," hope for acceptance was a strategic way for Rupa to mobilize, and to raise her children to be positive, as she hoped.

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[231] Jens Zinn. "'In-between' and Other Reasonable Ways to Deal with Risk and Uncertainty: A Review Article." *Health, Risk & Society*, vol. 18, no. 7-8, 2016, pp. 348–366.
[232] *Ibid.*

I saw this hope for acceptance quite clearly demonstrated one fall evening. Rupa had invited a friend and I to attend a Garba, a traditional dance celebration originating in Gujarat, most commonly known as part of one of the Navaratri celebrations centered around worshipping the Goddess Shakti, or feminine power. In a public event like this one, people of all ages often come knowing the intricate dance steps that are performed in alternating concentric circles. Many of these require a partner, and sometimes, when combined with *Dandiya*, another dance that is part of Navaratri festival, involve the rhythmic hitting of wooden sticks against those of one's partner while dancing. Rupa and I waited at her home for her friend, who had agreed to be her dance partner, to arrive. Her husband was too busy to attend. Rupa understood that I did not know the dances and was coming along as an observer rather than a performer. Eventually, however, rather than arriving as planned, Rupa's friend sent a text message stating that some incident had arisen, and she could no longer attend. Rupa and I decided to carry on without her.

Upon arriving, Rupa found a place for me to sit and observe while she joined a dance. Though my participation surely would have been advantageous, I opted not to attempt the dance because I did not know the steps and felt it might be disrespectful to throw off the celebratory flow by stumbling about as a novice. Initially, Rupa was able to enjoy a few dances where partners were not required. She danced in a group for about twenty minutes, looking back at me quite often to confirm that I was attentively watching her. When the dance concluded, she rushed back to the place where I was waiting and immediately inquired if I thought that she was one of the best dancers. She asked, "Did I

look really good? Did the other dancers notice me?" She continued to seek reassurance that I was impressed with her dancing and that others accepted her as a worthy part of the group dance.

In an article about the use of dance to alter social order, Nijhawan describes a contemporary dance done in historic churches in Britain and Europe wherein the performance alters the subjective sense of social norms in that space and creates new encounters.[233] There, dance movement radically changed social structures in measurable ways. This is mirrored in the descriptions William Sax provides of the use of dance in several Indian contexts to not only alter social realities, but to recreate the self. "Public ritual performances," he states, "are especially powerful means for creating (and sometimes undermining) selves, relationships, and communities, precisely because they inscribe cultural concepts on the whole person, the body as well as the mind, and they do so by requiring of their participants a public, embodied assent to those concepts."[234]

The Garba we attended was part of a fall Navaratri festival focused on prayer to Durga for the destruction of evil. Many sources suggest that the origin of the word Garba is derived from "Garbha," (गर्भ), the Sanskrit word for "womb," and when referred to as a "Garba Deep," includes the Sanskrit root for "lamp." Similarly, words like "gestation," "embryo" and "pregnancy" are also related to the Sanskrit word root. A clay lantern is

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[233] Amita Nijhawan. "Performativity and Nomadic Subjectivity in Shobana Jeyasinghs TooMortal." *New Theatre Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (October 2017): 22–30.
[234] William Sax and Oxford University Press. *Dancing the Self : Personhood and Performance in the Pandav Lila of Garhwal*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12.

often the center of the celebration as a manifestation or representation of life and light in the inner sanctum. Another perspective views the festival as a celebration of the circle of life and death and rebirth. Durga is thus worshiped as an unmovable part of this constant cycle where death and destruction are crucial to rebirth. In talking with one interlocutor about the meaning and origin of the word "Garba," he suggested that no one would think of the meaning of the word "womb" when they think of a Garba. "We don't talk about such things," he said. "However, the Hindi word for womb is closely connected to the part of the [Hindu] temple where only the priest can get that close to God." Despite the possible discrepancies in interpretation, associations of intimacy in referencing what is hidden, vulnerable and most precious seemed consistent.

In reflecting upon the meaning of Garba after the event, I reconsidered a conversation I had with Rupa shortly after she completed her first 20 minutes of dance. The conversation was so sudden and seemingly out of place, that I could barely comprehend its meaning before Rupa whirled away again to join another dance. She started by reminding me that she does not believe that death is necessarily a bad thing as it simply ushers in the next life. She wondered if I would be okay if she told me something. Some Americans have strong responses to this subject, she warned. I agreed to listen, not having any idea where this conversation came from or was headed. She had undergone several abortions, she wanted me to know. Was I okay with that? I stammered a minute not quite knowing why she told me that information right then, nor understanding what she was looking for as a response. I believe I said something along the lines of that information not changing our friendship. She nodded and ran off. My place at this Garba

and, indeed, in Rupa's journey seemed precarious and yet whimsical in a sense. While her desire for acceptance from the diaspora community seemed to be a driving force, it seemed as if gaining acceptance at least from me as an outsider might provide enough strength to go back to her hoping process for the more important gain of acceptance from her own community.

Reflexively, it was at moments like this that I began to wonder about the role of trust within relationships as a researcher. It was impossible to discern whether my status as an outsider created the safety that Rupa seemed to enjoy in asking for reassurance, or if it was a felt sense of friendship that enabled her to do so. In either case, there was a definite sense of precarious extension of trust that seemed critical for me to honor as a researcher, human and friend. In her article on the benefits and possible dangers of long-term fieldwork, Koepping suggests that the "central ethical problem of long-term fieldwork" is discerning the extent to which use of information gained in normal life conversations, rather than that which is clearly offered to a short-term researcher more obviously present in a given situation for the purpose of gathering that data, is appropriate.[235] The length of time on the field can render the role of the long-term researcher more vague in the minds of the interlocutors, perhaps. Thus, while there are significant gains in doing long-term research, especially with regard to intimate details that emerge in trusted relationships, there are also intensified ethical dilemmas demonstrated through Koepping's question, "To what extent is it proper to use information gained almost by chance during the conduct of an everyday life with friends to clarify and expand ones anthropological

[235] Koepping, Elizabeth. "Trust and Its Abuse in Long-Term Fieldwork." *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures* 3, no. 2 (1994): 99-116.

understanding?"[236] Strangely, though my research lasted only 18 months (with the exception of a few friends in the study that I had known for 10 years), I found myself needing to ask this same question. Intimate disclosures of the kind Rupa had suddenly offered were not unusual. Beyond the two previously named possibilities (being an outsider, and being viewed as a friend), I also began to wonder if it might be the intimate nature of the phenomenon that I was exploring, the presence of my family during the field work, or perhaps my previous professional skills as a clinical therapist that might be eliciting such confessions.

Rupa reentered the dance. This time, though she had no partner, she decided to enter into a dance that required pairs. At first, the other members attempted to adjust, matching up with her instead of their own partners, perhaps believing that the pairs were somehow just out of order. They carried on the dance as they recalculated next steps and tried to get back into alignment with their partners, only to be poorly redistributed a second time. They suddenly stopped the dance to sort out the confusion. When they realized that Rupa had joined without a partner, they told her she must leave the dance. She looked despondent and a bit desperate. I wished to jump in and help her, but these were the dances that required the perfectly timed clicking of sticks as well as coordinated dance steps. I definitely knew it would not be wise for me to attempt them lest I hurt someone with poorly timed or misplaced attempts at clicking.

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[236] *Ibid.*

When Rupa withdrew from the dance, we stood together trying to talk, but the singing voices of the hired musicians were so high-pitched and loud, it was quite impossible to hear one another. After some minutes, we decided to depart. The womblike swirling celebration of life and light in the inner sanctum of community and relational acceptance blurred and faded as the two of us were compelled to exit.

Early in this section, I mention Zinn's defense of hope as strategic. At times, I have wondered how Rupa is able to continue to hold the tension of hoping for acceptance with her community. In her situation, the balance of losses and gains, or successes and failures seems completely out of proportion. In the case of Rupa's hope for acceptance, it is the intensity of her desire for her children's happiness and success in the future that keeps her in a place of hope, even to the point of allowing her family to be dispersed in a way that causes her own deep loneliness. The conflict between these influences is strategically managed within the hoping process, despite the force of all the negative responses she has received. While perhaps not logically deduced, Rupa has rational reason to hope that the future will be an improvement from the past because hoping sustains her in the pursuit of her desires. Hoping that the abuses, failures and loneliness she suffered will not continue on through her children bolsters her energy and enables her maintain her commitment to positivity. Hence, instead of suggesting that Rupa is irrational, Zinn's research illustrates that Rupa's choice to keep hoping is reasonable and adaptive.

"Jyoti"

I found the hope for acceptance to be subtle but still very present in the experience of a woman from Gujarat living in the States since marriage, whom I will call "Jyoti." This particular woman hoped for acceptance by attempting to conform to her husband's family's expectations, the expectations of society and even the expectations of her Gods. After spending 12 years in New York, Jyoti and her family moved to the Chicagoland area where they have lived for 7 years. As mentioned in earlier, I met Jyoti in an Indian grocery store. For over ten years, I had been a customer in this small store. The owner is a slight, kind man who spent time warmly speaking with me about the products in his shop, and asked often about my children, despite the effort it took him due to his stammer. There were usually one or two other people in the store, always members of the Indian diaspora. Up until meeting Jyoti, no other customer had ever spoken to me. So when Jyoti abruptly asked me one day why I was fetching some Indian chili peppers out of the refrigerator, I was a bit shocked. I stood up to figure out who was speaking to me. When I saw her, I smiled and explained that I planned to cook with them. What, she inquired, was I going to be cooking with Indian chilies? I told her about the recipe I would be making and she nodded approval. She followed me and asked, "What else are you going to buy?" I smiled and told her that I wanted to buy some okra, which I also cooked "Indian style." She approved again. Next, she expressed her surprise to see me in the store and to hear about the Indian cooking I did. I assured her that I had been in the store many times and enjoyed cooking Indian cuisine. Still a bit shocked, she asked me why. Eventually, I told her my long-standing interest in India, the fact that I had an

adopted child from Kolkata and that I was studying Indian diaspora as a research topic. All of this fascinated her. She immediately took out her phone and requested my contact information, stating that we should meet soon. I gave her my cell number and in a few weeks, we met for coffee. Afterwards, she agreed to be interviewed about hope at later time in her home.

When I arrived for the interview, she first ushered me into a small den off her kitchen and had me stand before the home temple inside where she and her family worshipped daily. She explained to me that it was not the Gods she worshipped that she was revealing to me for research, but it was me that she was presenting to her Gods, for acceptance. She wanted to ask the approval of the Gods in her temple about our friendship; it was only through their acceptance that she could feel positive about continuing to discuss with me important topics, such as hope. She was not able to clearly articulate the means by which she came to know that the Gods accepted our friendship, but she was certain after our meeting that they had given approval.

As Jyoti shared her ideas about hope, she continually referred to some of the images and murtis I had seen, and who had seen me, in her home temple including a garlanded print of her guru. Jyoti initially shared her hopes by explaining how she and her family initially began to worship the same guru:

> … When we were children living in our place, our parents' house, okay, his ashram was next to our place. And he believes in our lord Datta, and he actually …um …how he says himself, he is one of God's messengers…a guru is like that. Y'know so that's how when we were children, like [my son's] age, we started going to the temple. The temple is there. Every evening the puja [worship] used to happen…and the morning puja and they used to give the Prasad [snack]…and that attracts! (laughs)…So that's how we started going over there….And we used to go whenever, after school and in the evening. That's how we started going and slowly our beliefs started growing. It's not like overnight. You go there just to have fun maybe. Or maybe see what

> is there. Our parents tell us to believe in god so we started believing. But the only thing is like, as our faith grows, when we started growing a little bit, and when we started getting real experiences in life, our faith started growing. Because…then we started believing…if I have anything troubling me or bothering me, or any situation I am in, and I start praying really hard. It will get me out of that. … We recently had so many situations in my sister's life also regarding visas and it was an unbelievable situation you would not even believe that she would get out of it and she got out of it. Just because, we believe, that he is the one, he saves us so many times. He is not there any more but his power is still there. That's why, when we go to India, we first visit there…his place. And we take the blessings and then of course, we go to the temple where our goddess is there. That gives us hope. …. We believe in that 100%.

Jyoti continued on to say that in college, her real connection with the guru began because she had "experiences," which she did not explain. Instead, Jyoti began to speak of her marriage as an "experience" as well. Her husband's family traveled to the temple of the same guru regularly as he was growing up, even though they were from a distant town. Over the span of many years, they never saw each other despite visiting the same ashram. Jyoti explained that she and her husband believe that they were made for each other and came together by the blessing of the guru. This increased their belief even more. In this way, Jyoti described hope as the direct result of worshipping the guru, which produced experiences and desired results.

However, Jyoti also explained that a connection to other Gods has been a little more complicated. As the main Goddess of her husband's family, Jyoti now worships Lakshmi, Goddess of wealth, two days a week:

> She is the one, takes care of everything, that's what I feel…it's not just because we are praying because she is our family God, it started that way, but slowly I started believing in her as well. Because y'know, she is the Goddess of wealth. It is very important. And we believe in that. Praying in the evening as well as praying specially on Friday. We say that Tuesday and Friday is Goddess day in the evening time.

Jyoti, spent a bit of time explaining that when she married, she had to switch her devotion from the God of her family of origin, Balaji (a form or incarnation of Vishnu), to

Lakshmi because it was her husband's family God. I asked her if it was understandable to a former God that a woman switch to worshipping other Gods after marriage or if, in fact, there could be any hurt feelings or negative repercussions of the change. Initially, she responded that it is fine and works out well since Lakshmi is the wife of Balaji anyway. But after a minute or two she replied, "But I never thought about it! That's a good question!! I can ask my mom." She reiterated that she did not have a choice and that it was expected of her to change; she must accept the Gods of her new family in order to be accepted into the family herself. With a reflective sadness, Jyoti explained that her family of origin used to worship Ganesh also, but it is forbidden in her current home. This is a loss for her:

> We used to get the statue of Lord Ganesh in the house and celebrate it for 10 days and then put it in the water. That statue goes in the water. But when I got married, they only do Goddess puja. They don't bring the statue in their house. So it is not in our family at all. And I miss that very much because it's so cute…that statue of that Ganesh is cute and it's a fun festival. But we don't do it, so, and members of our family did not have a good experience with that. They tried to forcefully celebrate that. And some trouble came. So we believe in those things. Even if I want to, I cannot.

Further, the letting go of Ganesh, and commencement of Lakshmi worship was not the only adjustment Jyoti had to make in order to receive acceptance from God, her family and even from the diaspora culture in the suburbs of Chicago. Jyoti worked diligently to recreate an attachment and involvement for her children in Hindu worship. Due to the challenges of living in suburban Chicagoland, which does not always cater to the rhythms of worship and celebration practices common to many Hindus, Jyoti often had to improvise. In *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*, Tim Ingold and Elisabeth Hallam differentiate between improvisation and innovation by allocating the first to an understanding of material things where the researcher realizes that meaning is in

flux.[237] Carrying forth meaning from one household to the next, from one country to the next, or from one generation to the next requires creative, complex reorganization or reinterpretation. By contrast, Ingold's and Hallam's views of innovation suggest that new ideas stand in strong defiance of old, stagnant ways and represent the movement of one person against the masses in a backwards interpretation of the meaning of an object. They prefer the forward approach of interpreting meaning as the product of improvisation by subjects adjusting with time to new situations that call for new meanings.

> Copying or imitation, we argue, is not the simple, mechanical process of replication that is often taken to be, of running off duplicates form a template, but entails a complex and ongoing alignment of observation of the model with the action of the world. In this alignment lies the work of improvisation.[238]
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> Just as a building that is not kept in repair soon disintegrates, so traditions have to be worked at to be sustained. The continuity of tradition is due not to its passive inertia but to its active regeneration – in the tasks of carrying on. [239]

I found this to be the case with Jyoti when I inquired about what aspect of hope was most important to her. She immediately said, "future….looking forward to future." She explained that though she considers herself religious, she has to be flexible and practical. The aspects of worship that were once practical or are practical still in India might not make as much sense in her present life. As an example, she explained that she does not offer sweets in worship any longer because she is more interested in health living in America than she had been when she lived in India, and the typical sweets offered (and eventually eaten by

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[237] Elizabeth Hallam, and Tim Ingold. *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*. (Oxford: Berg, 2007).
[238] *Ibid*., 5.
[239] *Ibid*., 6.

the worshipper) are full of sugar. Instead, she offers fruits to her gods. She makes these adjustments still hoping, subtly, that the gods will find her acceptable.

Hoping for acceptance from her husband's family by worshipping Lakshmi works well since worshiping Lakshmi leads to wealth, and that is also a means by which one finds acceptance within the Indian diaspora community. Another way to be acceptable within the Indian diaspora, and within the Hindu diaspora more specifically, is to maintain ethnically Indian traditions and Hindu values within the home. Jyoti explained that women are often especially expected to transmit these traditions and values. Prema Kurien discusses the construction of gendered identity in a diaspora setting in California, showing how the identity of women is shaped by, and in turn shapes, three levels of socio-ethnic expression: the household, the local ethnic community and pan-Indian organizations.[240] Jyoti managed to address all three levels while enjoying the financial effects of worshipping Lakshmi. Though her husband earns enough money for the family to live quite comfortably in the suburbs, Jyoti is committed to selling products through an internationally based company that works in a pyramid structure. She has demonstrated the efficacy of her products for me on a number of occasions, given me samples, and invited my husband and I to sell them "underneath her" in the sales pyramid. Though most of the people in the community of sales that were involved in this pyramid were Hindu

[240] Prema Kurien. "Gendered Ethnicity: Creating a Hindu Indian Identity in the United States." *American Behavioral Scientist* 42, no. 4 (1999): 648–670.

Indians, she assured us that we would be welcomed as white members among the group she had recruited to sell these products.

Moreover, Jyoti was training her 19-year-old daughter to sell them and to recruit her friends. In fact, her daughter helped Jyoti host a gathering that I was invited to attend one evening. Jyoti did not tell me what the event was, but simply said that a man would be visiting her home whom I should definitely meet because he knew a lot of people in the area and much about Hinduism. She suggested that he would be a useful person for me to interview for my research. When I arrived for the event, I was brought into the basement that was filled with about 25 members of the Indian diaspora, mostly young and middle aged adults. Folding chairs had been set up in rows and a screen caught the images projected from a laptop used by a speaker sharing the gains the company had made, and how much more money could be acquired with more sales. I sat completely confused as to why I was invited, but also amazed at the work ethic and determination of this group. This was a Friday night, and it was clear that most of the people in attendance had full time jobs that they had already worked that day, like Jyoti's husband. They were dressed professionally and had parked expensive cars in front of her home. Still, their desire for wealth and their willingness to put even more hours of effort toward financial improvement continued. The speaker finished and sat down, but was quickly followed by other speakers sharing motivational stories, quick tips for sales and graphs illustrating sales trends and projections. I had to leave immediately after the

meeting was over, but Jyoti followed me up the stairs and apologized that I did not get a chance to interact with the one man she hoped I would meet. She suggested that I come back another time when he would be attending so I could speak with him about my work.

These meetings and the involvement in this company seemed to me to be a very efficient way for Jyoti to execute her role of promoting values of financial determination and affluence to her children, while also building community within the diaspora. She was able to involve her local Indian community as part of an organization that dove-tailed with American norms[241] of working extra hours for desired wealth, which is also typical of many entrepreneurs in India.[242] As she fulfilled expectations for transmitting cultural and religious values of affluence, she was securing the blessings of Lakshmi in the process. Through introducing me to the group gathered for financial advancement that she had mustered for social capital typical of many Indian entrepreneurs,[243] she seemed to be asking if I found this whole enterprise to be acceptable and desirable. Zulema Valdez discusses the role of ethnicity in facilitating immigrant entrepreneurship through social capital generated by social networking.[244] She suggests that multiple dimensions of belonging and identity that are navigated

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[241] Norris Krueger, Francisco Liñán, and Ghulam Nabi. "Cultural Values and Entrepreneurship." *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 25, no. 9-10 (2013): 703-07.
[242] "India's Working Hours One of the Longest among Global Peers: NSSO Report." Moneycontrol. MoneyControl. Accessed September 12, 2019. https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/india/indias-working-hours-one-of-the-longest-among-global-peers-nsso-report-3593431.html.
[243] Arturs Kalnins, and Wilbur Chung. "Social Capital, Geography, and Survival: Gujarati Immigrant Entrepreneurs in the U.S. Lodging Industry." *Management Science* 52, no. 2 (2006): 233-47.
[244] Zulema Valdez. *The New Entrepreneurs: How Race, Class, and Gender Shape American Enterprise*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 3.

through social networking often affect entrepreneurial outcomes.[245] In inviting me, I wondered if Jyoti desired to expose me to her values and commitments in the same way she exposed me to her Gods to see if somehow I would be acceptable to her peers and her social community. Perhaps, she also sought my acceptance of her pyramid business, hoping that I would join as a means of broadening her social networks and business beyond the diaspora.

Though she and Rupa both demonstrated hopes for acceptance, Jyoti's tension in the hope journey was much less intense. With her solid financial situation and her daughter's bright future bringing her in alignment with expectations of the diaspora community, it might have been possible to miss the subtle losses and conflicts present in the process of hope for Jyoti. But in the moments when she talked about losing her Ganesha festival as well as her Balaji worship which had been symbols of hope for her in the past, and in the vulnerable moments when we waited before her Gods and her community to find out if I was acceptable as her friend, and possibly her future business partner, there was still a sense of uncertainty in Jyoti. Overall, though, Jyoti seemed pleased to reflect on the process of hoping as a journey that necessitated the balancing of many influences.

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[245] *Ibid.*

"Dave"

Another member of the diaspora hoping for acceptance from his deity and perhaps others was a man I met along with his wife at a local Indian Christian event. "Dave" and his wife have been in the US for over 40 years, members of that first wave of immigrants after the laws changed in 1965. They came for work.

To interact with Dave is to suspend any temptations toward formality that one might otherwise consider when approaching an older Indian gentleman. Often, even in the colder months, he is clad in cargo shorts and a t-shirt. He gives enormous "bear-hugs" rather than the more common "hands in Namaste" greeting that other men his age give in similar settings. Further, he is happy to email whimsical thoughts or recent 'YouTube" videos that he has encountered demonstrating a magic trick or new fad in India such as using edible cutlery made of lentils one can consume after finishing their carry-out meal. Dave sends these simply for the enjoyment of the recipient or their children. He is retired and loves to tell others that he does nothing for a living.

Dave was raised Catholic in southern India, and was expected to marry within his faith and caste.[246] His wife, a Hindu then, was a shocking choice for his family. Dave shared many photos of his childhood and extended family, but the photo he seemed most excited to show me was one of his wife when they first met. He mentions her beauty with a kind of wildness in his eyes, and it is clear that, despite the difficulties that they had due to

[246] David Mosse. "South Indian Christians, Purity/Impurity, and the Caste System: Death Ritual in a Tamil Roman Catholic Community." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1996, pp. 461–483.

differing backgrounds, he is thrilled with his choice even almost 50 years later. When Dave speaks about both his wife and his daughter, he exudes a pained adoration, acknowledging their passion and integrity, which are two attributes he does not seem to believe he exhibits. He laughs as he calls himself shallow and immature. Because of his self-abasing playfulness, it was initially tempting to believe that perhaps his self-assessment was correct. After hearing Dave call himself "happy and ignorant," it surprised me when he willingly shared a vulnerable confession of his desire for, and uncertainty about his acceptability before God. I asked him what his hopes are beyond this life, since he reported having no specific hopes remaining for anything on this side of death. He explained rather soberly:

> I hope for salvation. I am not sure I am going to go to heaven. And I am sure I'm going to go to heaven. I'm conflicted over this. Because I think I am a nice person and I think I'm not a very nice person. So I'm wondering because of the not so nice part about myself….whether I will make it. But I'm hopeful that I will. I believe that I'm saved. And I believe it will happen. But you know, there is always that doubt in your mind.

Despite his reports of "doing nothing" as a retired man, Dave spends considerable time taking care of a sickly elder in his extended family. Dave's care for this elderly relative is typical within the Asian community. In an article about mental health implications for aging immigrants in the US, Tummala-Narra, Pratyusha, et al. state,

> Although the traditional, venerated position of older adults in India may be somewhat shifting as the nuclear family unit is gradually replacing extended family living in some parts of India, those Asian Indians who have immigrated to the US are still socialized with the cultural values of respect and caring toward older adults and transmit these values to their children and grandchildren.[247]

Yet, there are more closely related others who could take on this key care role for this individual in Dave's family. I found his sacrificial commitment in odd juxtaposition with

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[247] Pratyusha Tummala-Narra, Nina Sathasivam-Rueckert, and Shraddha Sundaram. "Voices of older Asian Indian immigrants: Mental health implications." *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice 44*, no. 1 (2013): 1–10.

his carefree nature, his self-report of "doing nothing" and his description of "not so nice" parts of himself. I wondered if perhaps this might be a kind of Maussian attempt to secure salvation by doing "good" as a gift or offering to God. As Mauss states, "A considerable part of our morality and our lives themselves are still permeated with his same atmosphere of the gift, where obligation and liberty mingle."[248] I wondered if Dave's hope for acceptance might be part of this apparent duality of character, once again presenting as a balancing act between parts of self, between the past and the future. However, there was definitely no sense of obligation when I asked Dave why he chose to serve this relative so sacrificially. He explained, "I do it because she needs help, and she likes me. I don't know, really, why I do it."

At some point, Dave's faith changed from one of obligation to something personal. The sacrificial and perfunctory activities that Dave originally did to be acceptable to his father and his wife, eventually became something that he valued. He continued,

> I was born Catholic and my dad used to force me to get up every morning and go to church. And so throughout my childhood and early adulthood, I resisted religion. I said I've had enough of that. Y'know, I don't want to go again and again. But over a period of time, it has improved. And being with my wife, it has improved considerably. So now I come (to a place of worship) almost every day. I feel very comfortable and peaceful when I come (there).

His hope for acceptance though, has not been fully resolved. There are times when I was unable to acknowledge Dave's email immediately due to time restrictions. He sometimes followed up with an email asking if he had offended me. During one visit with Dave and his wife, Dave asked how my son was advancing in his skills as a drummer. When I

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[248] Marcel Mauss. *The Gift : the Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. (Abington: Routledge, 2002), 65.

mentioned that my son was loosing interest in drumming, Dave was disturbed by this and pressed me for further information. I explained that my son's interest was waning partially because he could not afford to purchase a new symbol, typically costing $100USD. The next time I saw Dave, he quietly asked me to deliver something to my son, and then he handed me a $100 note designated for the symbol. I felt uncomfortable and suggested that perhaps he need not give my son this money, but Dave insisted. Shortly afterwards, however, he followed up asking if he had crossed some line or if it was okay, if I was okay, if we were still okay, as friends.

This vulnerability once more showed me that hoping involves a journey. Dave's hope for acceptance seemed to entail the chasm of risk in relationship to friendship and in relationship to God. In moments, he felt surges of movement carrying him with confidence forward, but it also included moments of doubt and uncertainty that caused him to step back a bit.

Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to present stories, descriptions, transcriptions and interpretations about the hope to be accepted as a window into the experiences of some of the Indian diaspora groups and individuals with whom I spent 18 months. The hope to be accepted, while a broad category, captures one unique aspect of the Indian diaspora in Chicago, whether aimed at acceptance from one's family, one's social community or from one's God. Exploring the experiences of "Deepa," "ICC," "Rupa," "Jyoti" and "Dave" has provided images of how hoping for acceptance is a common and important

aspect of the lives of some diaspora in Chicago. Further, in considering their stories, the process of hoping has been portrayed as the holding of tensions, a balancing act that requires the negotiation of pressures from fears and doubts, as well as from desires and successes. Hoping for acceptance has involved issues from the past colliding in a moment with pressures and desires for the future. It has entailed reflecting upon the negotiation of these issues as they manifest in communities, objects, relationships and behaviors. We will see similar results in the next two chapters as we consider the hope to make a contribution and the hope to be true to oneself.

CHAPTER FIVE: Hope to Make a Contribution

There are many means by which one can attempt to give, or "contribute," to others and to God, and many motivations for attempting to do so. Theorists have offered descriptions and explanations of such exchanges. Mauss' "Gift" theory, mentioned in the previous chapter, which suggests that the exchange of objects between humans is a foundation of human interaction promoting the welfare of the giver, includes consequential outcomes such as obligations for recipients to reciprocate.[249] The theory further implies emotional responses such as a sense of inferiority for recipients who have not reciprocated, causing the recipient to "strive to do away with unconscious and injurious patronage" of the giver.[250] When reciprocation does not occur in some situations, power differentials and hierarchy can ensue. Levi-Strauss, having been influenced by Mauss, uses the theory of reciprocity to bring a structural understanding of social relationships.[251] He considers units of basic kinship as a structural way to understand social relationships, demonstrating how patterns of exchange are useful for survival. Ridley also describes reciprocity as a means of survival through the concept of a "web of indebtedness." Here, human survival is possible through the efficient exchanges that humans work out in order to be able to interdependently meet their needs.[252] There are many further extrapolations and applications of reciprocity that might be employed to explain the social exchanges taking place between individuals and groups. For the purposes of this chapter on "contribution," I will not be focusing on these theories to explain or describe the

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[249] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift : the Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*.
[250] *Ibid., 83.*
[251] Claude Lévi-Strauss and Andre Weil. *Elementary Structures of Kinship*. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1969).
[252] Matt Ridley *The Origins of Virtue*. (London: Penguin, 1997).

observations and conversations that took place in my research. Though they might offer a rich analytic of any one of the stories I will narrate in the upcoming pages, that level of analysis would distract from the main purpose of this chapter. The accounts herein are presented for the purpose of demonstrating that, according to both the interviews and the observations in my research, one of the major hopes present within the Indian diaspora in Chicago was the hope to give, or contribute, to others or to God. That is, they were motivated to make a contribution in a form they determined would influence the recipient positively. I will further make the case that the process of hoping for the outcome of influencing the recipient positively involved a complicated journey. The "chasm" metaphor returns, this time with the giver on one side and the successful positive change, or betterment, brought to recipients on the other. However, the journey of hoping to make a contribution, like the journey of hoping to be accepted, entailed obstacles and set backs as well as forward movement towards the desire to bring positive change. Past, present and future influenced the hope to contribute. Those I observed or interviewed described reflections upon the process of giving, suggesting that feedback about the successful receipt of their contribution was important to them for a variety of reasons. In this chapter, I am not attempting to diagnose or analyze motivations or social systems pertaining to the giving, or contributing that I observed. More directly, the purpose of this chapter is 1) to name that contributing to others was a key hope in the population studied, and 2) to suggest that this hope was a journey that was often complicated and risky for the givers, generating questions about assimilation, identity, family roles and the practice of faith.

To provide an initial illustration of this hope for contribution, in one conversation, an interlocutor was explaining to me how deeply she hoped to be as generous and helpful as her parents have been, and as the parents of many of her friends seemed to be. She explained that though it is the responsibility of her generation to care for parents who are in their 60's and 70's, they have not been able to honor this responsibility because of the pace of life in the US and their geographical distance from their parents who are back in India. Despite their perceived failure in this area, their parents often come to the US for 4-6 months of the year, tolerating the cold weather and isolation to be near their children and grandchildren. She explained that it is their parents who often bother to learn English because her own generation has often failed to teach their children to speak their parents' languages, rendering communication impossible if their parents do not learn English. Because most suburban middle class neighborhoods in the Chicagoland area require a car to reach even a local grocery shop, and the visiting parents do not drive, they often spend hours stuck at home while their families are at school and work. In comparison to their busy, people-centered lives in India, she explained, this is a huge sacrifice for these visiting parents. The interlocutor concluded by saying this contribution did not go unnoticed or unappreciated. She and the friends she knew who are in a similar position to herself often spoke about the huge positive difference that the visiting parents made. Their parents would sometimes prepare meals or clean while everyone else was busy out of the house. They would be at home to receive the grandchildren if their adult children had not returned home from work. Some eventually did get a US driver's license so that they could help get their grandchildren off to their many lessons and clubs. These services were contributions that inspired my interlocutor. She said she hoped to do the

same one day for others, to make such a meaningful difference. She, and others like her, were inspired by their parents' contributions and hoped to, likewise, inspire their own kids one day.

As with the previous chapter on the hope to be accepted, the hope to make a contribution may be a hope shared beyond the Indian diaspora. In another interview, one individual spontaneously started to talk about how a white friend who was dying of cancer started an "encouragement webpage" to contribute to the happiness and gratitude of others even while she was in the dying process. This contribution was often discussed by others in diaspora who read the dying woman's posts. The individual who described this to me suggested that this kind of contribution was one she found seldom, but one she hoped to emulate because it clearly reached the hearts of many people and brought about a change that was welcomed and meaningful. This hope may not be unique to the Indian diaspora in Chicago, but certainly was a commonly held hope that is worth exploring.

As mentioned, the hope to make a contribution, like the hope to be accepted, included a journey that entailed the collision of influences. Some contributions were not allowed to be made or were not received with the openness of those to whom they were aimed. Some were misinterpreted. Some were well received on some occasions, but were rejected at other times. As with the hope for acceptance, the journey of hoping to make a contribution included losses, desires, and influences from the past and future. Reflection upon the process was likewise a common aspect of hoping. Those expressing this hope for contribution referenced both a sense of agency and the limitations thereof.

In this chapter, I will illustrate this hope to make a contribution through several stories. First, I will describe the hope behind the initiation and sustenance of a local walking club that originated as a means to bring women of many ethnicities into a community focused on increasing their fitness and inspiring one another. Next, I will describe the story of a woman I will call "Shanta" whom I met at a ball through the walking club. Shanta offered to teach me Hindi, and eventually shared how the sacrificial contribution of her Goddess, Sati, inspired her own desire to contribute to others. Through this story, I will also describe how I was invited to contribute to the celebration of her new role as a mother-to-be. Thirdly, I will explain the ways in which the leader of a Center for Christian worship, "Anil," and a team of others there hoped to contribute to the spiritual journeys of others through contextualizing their worship service into an expression more familiar to Hindus through the intentional use of symbols and ritual. Finally, I will discuss the choice made by a couple in a local Christian church to reside in a city distant from all four of their sons and their grandchildren for the sake of contributing to their church. They especially hoped to aid in the spiritual formation of the third generation Indian diaspora, who were facing new challenges as they attempted to formulate and communicate their identity as Christians Indians in a US postmodern context.

As in the previous chapter, the people and events in these stories are much more complex and multi-faceted than these illustrations about the hope to make a contribution would convey. Much more could certainly be written about each of them. In this chapter, I am

highlighting part of each of their stories to communicate how this hope was present in their lives, uniquely manifested.

Local Walking Club

In the fall of 2015, I was admitted into a local walking club for women, as the only non-Indian diaspora member. It had not been intended to be an all-Indian group. While the three members who established it were all from the Indian diaspora, they had dreamed of being the founders of a group for members of many ethnicities coming together for the purposes of increasing health and friendship. These leaders had been members of other groups led by women of other ethnicities with similar goals. They hoped their group would be equally successful. When the group began, the original members invited their friends to join them, all of whom also happened to be from the Indian diaspora. These new members invited their own Indian friends. This continued until there were 100+ members, all of whom were from Indian backgrounds, though from various parts of India and with different languages and customs. Women from other ethnicities had been invited from time to time, but had not ever joined. Because of this, my arrival into the club as a white woman was very noticeable and seemed to trigger confessions of the longing of some of the group for a multi-cultural membership, and for a sense of being accepted as a community within the larger multi-ethnic suburban area. A number of women asked me specifically why no other women from non-Indian heritage would come. “Was it because they do not like Indians?” they wanted to know. “How can we get them to come?” they continued to ask, or perhaps, if I myself could bring more “others.”

In total, I walked with the walking club for about 40 weeks spread out over a year. During most weeks that I spent with the group, one or two of the women would walk alongside me, introduce themselves and begin a conversation. They would smile and respond to issues about which I had expressed interest. These often included recommendations for ways I could become further involved in the Indian community, the nearby temples that I should make sure to visit, recipes I should try, and much more. The women were a mix of professional and stay-at-home mothers. They ranged in age from about 30 to 70 years old. One woman brought her mother along each week; she was one of the fittest walkers in the group. The members of the group had immigrated or had family who had immigrated from many parts of India. Some women only walked with others who could speak their local languages, so I was not able to interact with them. The leaders required members to purchase and wear a red t-shirt with the group's name printed upon it each Saturday to increase the sense of community, and to advertise the group. This helped to distinguish between those who were in the group and others who might be walking concurrently in the same location.

The group met formally every Saturday at various parks around the area if weather was pleasant, and in a mall, if the weather was not. Though Chicagoland is supplied with abundant nature preserves and parks with walking trails, the topography of the state is extraordinarily flat due to the pressures of glacial recession in the past. Whether we met in these flat parks or in the mall, the walks occurred upon unchallenging and level surfaces. The sensory experiences of the walking group were therefore limited in many ways. Since temperature was accounted for through the decision to transition to the mall

whenever weather was predicted to be cold or wet, and the topography was monotonous and predictably flat, most influences upon the walkers were limited to social factors such as the amount of women who were attending, the other people present outside the group, or occasional changes to the location due to holidays such as the presence of a large Christmas tree inside the mall during November and December. However, walking speed and positioning in the group may have had an effect on the walkers' experiences of vision. Katrin Lund discusses the effects of bodily movement on the sense of vision that has often been understood as an objective and isolated physical sense, rather that one that takes cues from interacting with input from other senses, such as touch.[253] By using examples from the traversing of Scottish Mountains, she shows that vision needs to be understood within the spatio/temporal context. In Lund's example, speed, rhythm and postures in movement are forces that bring the body of the climber together with the landscape.[254] Because of our red shirts and the tendency to walk in a strung out set of small groups, those who were fastest and located in the front of our group may have had a different visual experience than those in the middle or back. In passing people at the mall or in parks who were not familiar with the walking group, there was often a sense of disbelief at the sheer numbers of diaspora Indians in red shirts walking in a particular place. Those in the front probably did not experience the surprise of the onlookers responding to the continual passing of 100 or so uniformed walkers on a given morning. Those in the front also were the first finished, and were often the ones who called for a photo on a particular staircase or in front of a new decoration in the park or mall in which

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[253] Katrín Lund. "Seeing in Motion and the Touching Eye: Walking over Scotland's Mountains." *Etnofoor*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2005, pp. 27–42.
[254] *Ibid.*

we could all stand. It was their job to survey the options. While these are different considerations than the sensory input that Lund's article raises in changing vision, speed and rhythm did effect the experiences of vision in the walking group, but in a much more socially applied manner. Without realizing it at the time, I often intentionally selected my pace to position myself toward the middle or back of the group, so that my vision could include the sea of red shirts before me or around me, juxtaposed with onlooker's perplexed expressions. As a compliment to Lund's point, the desire for certain vision was effecting my bodily movement. The flatness of the earth, however, never offered viewpoints from above or below. Had it done so, my vision of the red "sea" would have been much altered.

In the group, daily walking, or walking at least 3 or 4 times a week, was expected for all the members independently, and needed to be recorded and reported. The group members were divided into sub-groups according to commitment and walking ability. Those sub-groups kept in touch through social media, and members were required to submit regular photo collages of sights or symbols of things they experienced on their walks, along with a "selfie." Sometimes, themes were added to the list of requirements for the collages such as "things you are thankful for," around the American Thanksgiving holiday. If a member failed to submit these collages, they could be demoted to less committed groups, and eventually deleted from the club altogether. Children and religious objects were often included in these photo collages. Nature was a very large point of connection for these women, often portrayed in the collages as well. Travel, too, was an important aspect of life that was regularly depicted. I found these collages to be of great value as a window

into the daily lives and concerns of these women. Here, the women were literally revealing to each other their perspectives of the landscape that shaped their day-to-day lives, as they in turn, left their own prints upon it.

In his *Being Alive; Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description,* Tim Ingold traces the evolution of the cultural value of movement in western culture from that which could not include higher cognition to that which should be understood as a means of intelligent perception precisely because of its involvement with the landscape and its likeness to "real life."[255] Though walking, in particular, used to be an activity left to the unfortunate who could not enjoy moments of rest, and the consequentially possible reflection and cognition that are available when one is not in motion, Ingold explains that walking is actually an activity that provides essential opportunities for perception and cognition that would otherwise be inaccessible.[256] Walking leads to knowing, though in much qualified ways compared to the past when thick-soled boots were not normally employed and earth was not paved by flattening, imprint-less materials.

Tagore concurs with Ingold's suggestion. In defense of his acceptance of the practice of students in his school studying shoe-less, he writes:

> Naturally, the soles of our feet are so made that they become the best instruments for us to stand upon the earth and to walk with...I am not for banishing footgear altogether…. But I have no hesitation in asserting that the soles of children's feet should not be deprived of their education, provided for them by nature, free of cost. Of all the limbs we have they are the best adapted for intimately knowing the earth by their touch. For the

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[255] Tim Ingold. *Being Alive : Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. (London: Routledge, 2011), 36-40.
[256] *Ibid.*

> earth has her subtle modulations of contour which she only offers for the kiss of her true lovers—the feet.[257]

Further, it is in response to the social environment and the physical landscape itself, suggests Ingold, that we can come to know more about the walker.[258] They are shaped by the experience of walking around and with others, and they are affected by their experiences of the ground, the surroundings, and the obstacles on their paths. In turn, walkers shape the landscape and their social environment by how they move, whether this reciprocal shaping is accepted and welcomed by others, or not. Thus, through walking with these women and seeing their collages, I gained a sense both of the influences on their lives, and also of their success in shaping it, in having an influence for the better, and specifically in contributing to the fitness of other women by offering a multi-ethnic fitness community, as they desired.

On Saturday mornings, the walks began at a certain time after the leaders made announcements. These would include names of the winners of contests that were held for the greatest amount of steps taken, the most collages submitted or some other goal that had been previously established. There were often subtle allusions to social things that happened during the week that some of the members had attended outside of the actual group. I was never invited to these events, and so did not get these personal jokes or references. Since almost all members of the group were Hindu, most of these pertained to parties celebrating Hindu festivals and holidays where people came together for shared

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[257] Rabindranath Tagore. *Personality: Lectures Delivered in America*. (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1917), 119.
[258] *Ibid.*

meals and ceremonies. The gatherings of friends seemed to happen between those who came to the group already knowing each other. I did express an interest in attending any festival or celebration that anyone would be willing to share, but that never transpired. This was an interesting contrast, I thought, to their longing for others to join the walking club. There may have been a number of reasons that they did not express for which they did not invite me to join their private celebrations. I wondered if one reason they did not want non-Indians coming further into their private lives might be attributed to their already coming "half way out" to meeting others by gathering in a mall or public park, offering an activity that was generally about fitness, which was an activity that many people of all ethnicities seem to value in the suburbs of Chicago. Though most of these women were raised wearing shalwar kameez[259] and saris with "slippers," or sandals, and often wore them at home, here the women had donned yoga pants, t-shirts and thick-soled shoes. I attempted to communicate that I was more malleable or impressionable than the hard pavement, yet sharing faith celebrations did not seem to be the imprint that they hoped to make upon me. It could be that the nature of these celebrations was intimate and sacred, and therefore not a place to invite an acquaintance who would be attending as a researcher. It could have been due to a lack of personal affinity with me, or it could have been due to the use of local languages that were often utilized in these smaller celebrations of sub-groups.

Alternatively, a more psychological interpretation could be considered. In an article by Seel et al. on the effect that walking through a doorway can have on memory, findings

[259] Common apparel of women from South Asia involving a dress and pants that are typically wide at the waist and narrower at the ankle.

demonstrate that shifting locations reduces memories associated with recalling the details of a previous location once one has crossed through the threshold of a doorway to a new location.[260] There are many directly psychological applications for these findings, but here I offer them as a possible explanation for the hesitancy of this group in bringing "others" more deeply into their religious and personal lives that reflect more of their Indian heritage and culture. Could there be a "doorway" of this walking group that strives to be multi-ethnic which reduces "memories" associated with being a part of the Indian diaspora in the moments when it meets? I wondered if here, in the mall or nature preserve, relationships were desired to be formed around fitness only and should not cross back through the doorway of religious consideration or expression because of an underlying need to keep things categorically separate. As in the stories of the hope to be accepted, the process of hoping to make a contribution by this walking group seemed to entail some ambivalence about sharing Indian ethnicity or religious expression.

After announcements, the group would begin to walk. There were themes attached to the Saturday walks as well. Depending on which Indian (mostly Hindu) or American holiday was approaching, saris or certain colors would be required wear for the walk instead of the club t-shirt. On one occasion, I brought my teenaged daughter to join the Saturday walk, and it was a week when we were expected to wear a sari around the mall. As we arrived, somehow my sari passed inspection, but my daughter was immediately unraveled right in the mall entrance and retied. Since the mall was closed to all but walkers, and no

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[260] Sabrina Seel, Alexander Easton, Anthony McGregor, Matthew Buckley, and Madeline Eacott. "Walking through Doorways Differentially Affects Recall and Familiarity." *British Journal of Psychology* 110, no. 1 (2019): 173–184.

one outside the group had arrived yet, this happened in the privacy of the group of women. The ease with which the members of the walking club took matters into their own hands to help my daughter's apparel issues was stunning. They worked together with rapid intention and precision until she was retied and pinned perfectly. Through this act, I found Ingold's point that the walker makes the landscape as much as the landscape shapes the walker to be true, since the "environment" of the mall was transformed for the morning through the presence of a large group of sari clad walkers, and my daughter was literally reshaped by their presence. Though the walking shoes worn by the women of the walking group left no permanent mark on the floors of the mall or the hard asphalt paved paths, they did strive to make a mark socially and to move in a way that brought change by helping others. The amount of change they were able to bring seemed contingent upon the malleability of the environment, socially and physically.

In addition to the spontaneous questions by various members as to why other non-Indians would not join the club, I was actually taken aside by one of the leaders one day and asked specifically if I could explain why white women in particular did not like to join Indian events or majority Indian groups like this one. She lamented about their longing to contribute, to "give back" by organizing this group for all, but found that only Indian diaspora would accept their contribution. I offered what I believed to be true, that unfamiliarity with the Indian diaspora produced the lack of a sense of belonging for people of other ethnicities. Despite the total absence of people of other ethnicities in the group, which diminished a sense of control or knowing how to "be" or belong for non-Indians, I suggested that the walking group leaders had made the group as accessible as

they could by meeting in community spaces that were familiar to women of other ethnicities. This is consistent with the findings of Blokland and Nast in their article on public familiarity increasing comfort zones, which demonstrated that public spaces of "in betweeness," where people of multiple ethnicities feel comfortable and can mix as groups, enhances a general sense of belonging.[261] Their research suggests that the intermingling of ethnic groups in public spaces facilitates a sense of immersion or assimilation for migrants. However, perhaps this sense of belonging does not facilitate those in the majority culture from feeling as though they "belong" when in a group entirely comprised of ethnic minorities. While the spaces were familiar and public, a sense of belonging may still have been too low because ethnicities were not mixing. Belonging was certainly plentiful in other spaces within the suburbs where walking or other exercise took place, so I believed most non-Indians opted for groups were they could enjoy its comforts. The leader was satisfied with this answer to a certain extent, but continued to describe the ways the group attempted to be welcoming to others.

There was a certain degree of "otherness" that was just a norm within the group itself, as different subgroups (divided by language and regions of India) congregated during the walks or on days in between. As mentioned earlier, I was a part of the group to a certain extent, and yet was not invited into any of the subgroups or the midweek events that were gathering because of mutual language or the celebration of devotion to certain deities. The hope of becoming a fitness group that included many ethnic groups perhaps may

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[261] Talja Blokland, and Julia Nast. "From Public Familiarity to Comfort Zone: The Relevance of Absent Ties for Belonging in B Erlin's Mixed Neighbourhoods." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 38, no. 4 (2014): 1142–11 59.

have been inhibited by the inherent diversity within the group expressed by the exclusive subgrouping of its members who gathered to speak specific languages and worship particular deities. Further, as I reflected on Ingold's ideas about the evolution of boots and paths and movement where rubber meets the road literally, and has so little effect, I wondered what else might be at play that limited the growth of this walking group culturally. Ingold describes a western cultural perspective where,

> The environment, built by human hands should ideally remain unscathed by the footwork of dwelling. To the extent that the feet do leave a mark—as when pedestrians take short cuts across the grass verges of roads, in cities designed for motorists—they are said to deface the environment, not to enhance it…This kind of thing is typically regarded by urban planners and municipal authorities as a threat to the established order and a subversion of authority.[262]

Could this walking group be viewed as attempting to leave a mark where none was welcomed? Could it be that majority cultural women and other non-Indians possibly saw the leadership of this group to be a threat to the established order or some kind of subversion of cultural "authority?" I did invite other non-Indian women to join but none would even visit. The reasons were never explicitly anything negative, or suggestive that a group led by Indians was regarded as subversion of authority. Simply, logistics were difficult or they preferred a different kind of exercise than walking, I was told. At least these were the initially verbalized responses, but I still wondered if Ingold's descriptions may have been a factor on deeper level.

The hope of the founders of this walking club, to form a multi-ethnic group where they contributed to the health and community formation, was not unique to this particular

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[262] Tim Ingold. *Being Alive : Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, 44.

group. One woman in the group was a yoga leader. In describing her hopes for increasing her own yogic practices, she conveyed a similar vision, "I can also spread awareness, that yoga has good value for everyone, I have hope for me and hope for sharing fitness, because I think…when you are fit, you are more positive. When you are positive, that is contagious. You give it to other people."

Interestingly, this yoga leader seemed to attract more non-diaspora followers in her small classes than were present in the large walking club. As mentioned in the previous chapter with regard to ICC, cultural appropriation of practices that are viewed as "spiritual" or "eastern," such as yoga, is a trend that is increasingly attractive to members of a variety of ethnic groups. This is evidenced by a wide variety of expensive and specialized products and services related to yoga that have sold in increasing quantities.[263] The yoga leader would have to decide if the culturally appropriated yogic practices fulfilled her hope for spreading yoga as she had come to value it. This hope to make a contribution in the walking leaders as well as the yoga leader was a journey that included movement across the chasm of what was currently happening (small, Indian groups) to what was desired (large, multi-ethnic groups). The process entailed gains and losses and the intersection of past and present identities, sometimes smoothly and sometimes at cross-purposes. Reflection upon the process of crossing this space often manifested in the reconsideration of the software and social media used for the group, methods for advertising, reconfiguration of subgroups and the means by which to entice more non-

[263] Kiran Kaur. "Why Saying 'Namaste' Is Culturally Insensitive and NOT Just a Yoga Term." Medium. Medium, August 18, 2018. https://medium.com/@kirannotkeiran/why-saying-namaste-is-culturally-insensitive-and-not-just-a-yoga-term-36c0e99f9851.

Indians to join. A sense of agency was still possible. After a year of growth in Indian diaspora attendance with only one white attendee who was present to conduct research, however, reflection by the group members sometimes morphed into a more passive lament with expressions of frustration and rejection. They continued to ask questions such as "What are we doing wrong? What can we do so that they will join us and accept our contribution?" Though these questions may have been derived from assumptions distinctive of their group regarding the valuing of others evidenced through their willingness to join the club, they caused the member's experience of hope to be a complex process that entailed the recognition of risk. This was another example of the hope to make a ` contribution as a clear theme present and active in the Indian diaspora in my research.

The Valentine's Ball and "Shanta"

One Saturday, at the start of the walking club, the announcements included news of a Valentine's Day ball the group would be hosting. Western attire in peach, red or black was recommended for the ladies, and black for the men, or blue if their partner was in peach. A substantial fee would need to be paid per ticket. Children were welcome to attend a special program that would be arranged for them at the ball. There would also be a DJ, and a fashion show would showcase those who volunteered to model. Dinner would be served and a photographer present to take family photos. The leaders were excited and encouraged all to attend and to invite friends of all ethnicities. I invited my husband, my four children, and a Korean-American friend, all of whom attended the event with me. We were the only non-Indians present.

Upon entering the large room, which was part of a community center in a nearby suburb, we encountered a long line of people waiting to have their photos taken. Almost every woman present was in a red formal gown. Many dresses were even the exact same design, and the women who wore them also wore matching tiaras in their hair. It seemed that much coordination and communication must have taken place outside the large group meetings to bring all this together. If so, I had not been included in it. I wore a black dress, which was on the list of options, but was chosen by only one other woman out of the 50+ who were present.

The woman behind me was the sole wearer of peach, her husband in the required blue. "Aarush" and "Shanta" were a newly married couple in their early twenties, just having arrived from California 20 days before. They had come to the US shortly after marriage so that the Aarush could pursue an MBA. Accountant by background, Shanta was not allowed to work in the States on their current US visa, so had spent the past two years making friends and getting to know their Californian neighborhood. Now in this new location, chosen because Aarush obtained a job in finance after completing his MBA, Shanta felt she had to start all over. They hoped their attendance at the ball could perhaps bring about some connections to new friends. I am not sure how Shanta and Aarush had heard of the ball or the walking club, but they knew no one. I wondered if my own obvious otherness in ethnicity and clothing selection mirrored the lack of connection that Shanta felt, and perhaps gave her the confidence and desire to connect with my family and I.

We spoke with the two of them easily. Aarush and Shanta shared the story of their "love marriage," which began at their previous employment in Mumbai. In the diaspora communities in which I did my research, this was one of very few love marriages I encountered. Shanta had actually been Aarush's boss, but they became fast friends as well, leading to their engagement. They told the story of their families' quick acceptance of the arrangement with a lightness and ease between them. Originally from Bihar, Shanta had already been accustomed to being away from her family as she worked in Mumbai when she met Aarush. Because she was educated and employed, her family consented to her relationship with this new fiancé. As Shanta spoke of her family, she expressed enjoyment and a deep sense of connection. She was eager for their approval and was thrilled that it was given in relation to Aarush.

Shanta was also eager to be of help for my research, which I explained to them at the ball. After I shared that I was slowly attempting to learn Hindi, she quickly pursued my personal contact information, promising that she had nothing to do all day since she was not allowed to work, by the rules of their visa. She would be happy to teach me some Hindi, she said. She had hoped to find a way to volunteer or contribute to someone in need. This, she explained, would help her cope with the boredom and sense of uselessness that she felt.

Some youths approached my daughters and offered to sit with them at the ball. Some small boys played catch with a football in the corner of the room and invited my sons to

join them. Later, a magician came and performed some tricks with a goose for the kids. Finally, a DJ set up his equipment and a runway was laid out for the fashion show. About 30 of the women in red matching dresses and tiaras lined up. This ball was extremely well organized and intentionally planned.

With special lighting and announcements from the DJ set to music, each woman in the line took a turn walking out on the runway, spinning a few times and posing for photos from spouses and friends. A power-point slide provided information about the achievements of each woman as she came forward: the amount of steps taken, the amount of time walked and the number of collages she had posted. Though the dresses and headpieces were uniform, there was great variety in the models who participated. The women were all ages, sizes, and levels of achievement. Regardless of these differences, they all walked freely and with spirit, twirling and posing as if on a Paris runway with no apparent self-consciousness. If there were issues in the group regarding anyone else feeling a sense of otherness, it was impossible to detect.

After the fashion show, the DJ segued into some dance songs. Immediately, a group of three men in suits went to the dance floor and moved in unison to the music, imitating the moves of one another and laughing together. This continued on for a few songs with more and more men joining. Eventually, a few men approached my husband and one of my sons, suggesting that they join them on the dance floor. They did, and the other men dramatized their dance moves to make imitation easier. Many eyes were on my son and husband, the only two white people dancing in the room, and many heads nodded

approval as they attempted to imitate the men who seemed to be leading with traditional Bollywood dance moves.

While the details of the confluence of events may seem superfluous at first glance, they are significant with regard to the theme of the hope to make a contribution. The intention of the walking club leaders in organizing this elaborate ball was to further promote the walking club in its sense of community and friendship, and to hopefully broaden its attendance by offering a community activity to which the members could invite non-Indians. In suggesting the attendees wear "western" style dress and by hosting it in a community venue, the group was once again reaching beyond its typical ethnic expression to welcome women interested in fitness and community of any ethnicity. There were, however, very specific guidelines or codes regulating the ways in which one might be able to participate which may have been motivated by the leaders' desire to contribute a strong sense of community cohesion. Further, even when one adhered to the general guidelines, such as wearing one of the three required colors, it became clear that there were also special arrangements made between some of the members that indicated smaller internal communities to which some were not invited. Yet, the invitation to join the community was palpable as the men invited one of my sons and husband onto the dance floor and very dramatically articulated their dance moves so that my son and husband could emulate them. There seemed to be an unspoken agreement in this act. It was as if we, as outsiders, were being invited in to a certain extent, but also being held at a certain distance. By dancing, somehow, especially by imitating the specific moves, it seemed as if my husband and son were being asked to demonstrate that they accepted not

only the community, but also the positioning of our selves within the community as novices of Indian dance and tradition. It was a "pledge" of acceptance of the contribution made, to borrow from Rappaport.[264] Like the Maring man's pledge to fight, which Rapport describes as intrinsic to the act of dancing in Papua New Guinea, the participation of my family in the imitation and joining of this dance, seemed to communicate that we were accepting the gift of being welcomed into this community with certain restrictions and specific parameters set and communicated.

As the ball continued, women joined the dancing as well, with the two genders dancing in separate circles. In contrast to many balls that might be held in a venue like this in the Chicago suburbs, the dresses and dances were modest, and no alcohol was available. The children seemed to be welcomed as an important part of this "night life." Eventually, the two circles merged, and all danced together for a number of hours. My family and I began to pack our things to leave, when Shanta and Aarush approached us again, reiterating their desire to stay in touch.

A few days later, I received a text from Shanta offering again to teach me Hindi. We arranged for me to come to her smallish apartment in another suburb since she did not have access to a car. Spartan in décor since they had only just moved, the apartment was bright and friendly due to a skylight in the living room. Shanta explained that the skylight was the precise reason she wanted this apartment, a chance to see something bigger than

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[264] Roy Rappaport. "The Ritual Form." *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 23–68.

her reduced world. There was a curious absence of a home temple in the apartment that I noticed compared to most Hindu homes that I had visited. Shanta quickly told me that she had been to a Catholic school in India, and was very comfortable praying to Jesus along with her family Goddess. She continued, explaining to me the importance of her Goddess, Devi Sati, from which the controversial practice of sati (entailing a widow throwing herself into the funeral pyre of her husband as an act of loyalty and commitment to the marriage[265]) is derived. Sati worship is controversial and easy to misunderstand, she explained. She tried to clarify that to have the chance to give of oneself to the point of death, and then to be received by Shiva was beautiful and exciting. According to Hindu mythology, Sati (wife of Shiva) throws herself into the sacrificial fire of her own father as an act of loyalty to her husband, Shiva, who is excluded from her father's devotional act. There are multiple versions of what happens to Sati after she is reborn, but she is clearly viewed by Shiva and her devotees as one who demonstrates perfection in wifely devotion.[266] Shanta desired to emulate this kind of devotion in her own marriage. She had already sacrificed her career to support her husband in coming to the US. She was adamant about being subservient to any desires of Aarush's mother, who was very particular about the manner in which they honored religious rituals in their wedding ceremony and in their home when she was visiting.[267] Shanta also hoped to sacrificially

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[265] Victoria Kennick Urubshurow. *Introducing World Religions*. (Abington: Routledge, 2008), 244-245.
Anne Hardgrove. "Sati Worship and Marwari Public Identity in India." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 3 (1999): 723–52.

[266] "Obo." Sati - Hinduism - Oxford Bibliographies, October 23, 2019. https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399318/obo-9780195399318-0082.xml.

[267] For a point of comparison, Hindu interlocutor gave her perspective on Sati and family devotion. While honoring Shanta's identity in confidence, I described Shanta's sacrificial attitude. The other interlocutor, who is an IT worker from Delhi, responded, "Wow, someone can still do this?!…Giving up a career is one

volunteer and contribute to a community if she could locate one where she felt comfortable and welcomed. Now Shanta was eager to be sacrificial in teaching me Hindi without pay.

After a few Hindi lessons, Shanta started to cancel our visits due to sickness, and shortly afterwards, shared that she was pregnant with her first child. Our Hindi lesson visits resumed but less frequently, and were less focused. We vacillated between her inquiries about baby care and equipment with Hindi alphabet recitation and phonics. She shared the many requirements that her mother-in-law had communicated for exactly how she was to conduct her pregnancy, birth and the blessing and naming of the baby. Once again, she was eager to comply, and felt proud to be providing a grandchild to her parents-in-law. Unlike the interlocutors in the opening of this chapter who felt that they were not able to contribute to their parents by teaching their children their parents' languages and taking care of their parents as they aged, Shanta was determined to contribute meaningfully to her mother-in-law despite living on the other side of the globe.

Shortly afterwards, news came that it was unlikely that Aarush's work visa would be renewed. They would have to begin looking for jobs in India, Australia or England. The baby was due at the end of November and they would need to leave 60 days after the birth. During this time, dynamics with Shanta changed. Her usual commitment to being positive started to understandably droop. She was very tired and, though she tried her best to trust that all would be well with the move, she was clearly frustrated that she could not

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thing but wanting to go out of the way to adapt a lifestyle which is considered as a sacrifice…this used to be 'expected' but they are coming out of it…so this becomes going backwards."

create a proper home for her child in the first 60 days, nor could she even plan for the future without knowing to which country they would be emigrating. Within Shanta's hope to contribute to my studies, the joy she seemed to feel in offering Hindi lessons clashed with fears about having to move internationally with her first baby.

On a final visit before her sister-in-law would be arriving, shortly before her baby's due date, Shanta wanted to cook a special Bihari lunch for two of my children and I. Dal, rice, vegetable curry and some roti were set on the table as we arrived. She was extremely excited that my children enjoyed her food so much, demonstrated by their asking for seconds and eating every morsel of food on their plates. We began to play a game guessing the gender, the date of birth and the weight of Shanta's baby. During this game Shanta lightened up again in a way I had not seen in months. Though her desire for stability and some sense of control had been denied, she certainly still found much hope in serving others, offering the best of her cultural heritage and her efforts, even at a very late stage in her pregnancy. The acceptance of her gift, or contribution to my children seemed particularly important to Shanta. She was still able to give and be received in a meaningful way. She could still exercise some agency.

About one week later, I received a text inviting me to attend a baby shower for Shanta, which she had previously mentioned to me. It was from a person I did not know at a home I had never visited before. I was not aware of any apparel or traditions that I needed to honor, but I was told to bring $10 cash to help with the cost of the decorations and

cake, which was unusual etiquette compared to most showers that I have attended in the US. I wore Indian clothes and brought a small gift for Shanta along with the $10.

When I entered, I realized that I was the only non-Indian person, once again, and initially the only person wearing Indian clothes. I was also the only person with a gift, except for Shanta's sister-in-law, who had brought a gift for me from India. It was a lovely Indian kurta and some sweets. Men stood in the kitchen eating, and women began to rearrange the living room couches, exposing an open space of carpet for a dance floor. In ones, twos and fours, the women suddenly ran off to don fancy Indian dresses, saris and shalwar kameez, arriving back to perform rehearsed dances as gifts to Shanta. Shanta sat and watched with a polite smile and a tired expression.

She told me later that these women had been very kind to her, lending her many things she needed which was Indian custom, rather than purchasing and giving new things. New things, she explained, could not offer the same omen used items from a previous healthy baby could, so they were not valued. Though I had no dance prepared as a gift for Shanta (I had not been told to prepare one), I had been at least able to lend her a baby crib that my children had used safely. As the women performed their dances, I was struck by the freedom the women showed in dancing so openly in this way, which seemed unique compared to my experience in majority culture baby showers in suburban US where women sit and play formal party games. Often, in majority culture American baby showers, the guest of honor opens her gifts, which are typically bought from a registry selected by the mother-to-be, and brought by all the guests. Here, once again, dance was

the gift or contribution that was offered. Kevin Shilbrack states, "Body techniques are acquired and embodied cultural competencies."[268] He elaborates that they are "manifestations of embodied cultural competence and understanding, uses which we, qua bodies, make of ourselves for specific purposes."[269] Perhaps it was the effort or the beauty of the dances prepared that were the significance of the gesture. Since they were modern, Bollywood style dances, they seemed to embody pop culture rather than the symbolism or narrative of classical Indian dance. In any case, these dances were clearly the gift brought by each guest to contribute to the wellbeing of the mother and new baby.

After each of the pre-planned dances were performed, the owner of the home played some general Bollywood style music and all the ladies began to dance together in the middle of the living room. Shanta just watched and laughed, and I continued to sit by her alongside a wall. Eventually, I was pulled into the group to dance as well which brought a swell of greater laughter to the group and to Shanta. Once again, my dancing seemed to signify a kind of agreement or pledge that I joined the group in celebrating the new child, and in wishing Shanta good health and joy in motherhood.

Shanta's baby boy was born a few weeks later, and Shanta texted me about 3 weeks after that, inviting me to come meet him. When I arrived, with two of my children, the baby was immediately handed to me. He was healthy and seemed very well cared for by the two admittedly exhausted parents. Aarush's mother was still in town, and she sat silently

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[268] Kevin Schilbrack. *Thinking through Rituals : Philosophical Perspectives*. (Abington: Routledge, 2004). 35.
[269] *Ibid.*

at a table in the adjoining dining room, not acknowledging me but smiling at, and eventually hugging, my children.

The baby had black cotton threads tied around his neck, on his wrists and on his ankles, all of which were remnants of the *namkaran* (नामकरण), the auspicious Hindu ceremony for naming their new baby twelve days after birth. Though the mother is especially honored during this ceremony for giving birth to the new baby, Shanta felt exhausted by it. She explained that they had held the ceremony over Skype in the middle of the night because Aarush's mother wanted a certain priest in India to perform it, so they had to perform it virtually, without community, and at a time convenient for the priest in India rather than one convenient for Shanta or the baby. Shanta assured me, though, that she was very willing to satisfy the wishes of her mother-in-law, and was grateful for the chance to offer her cooperation in this way, because she knew her mother-in-law recognized her efforts to be a dutiful daughter.

I went back to see Shanta and her baby a few more times before she and Aarush and the baby had to leave the country. The last time, they had only a couch, a mattress, a bike and two lawn chairs left in the home, besides their luggage. Shanta conveyed that she wished she could have been more help, that I could have learned more Hindi, and that she hoped to keep in touch as they went off to India.

Both the Valentine's Ball and my meetings and interactions with Shanta demonstrated this hope to make a contribution as a journey that involved risks, set backs, fears and

intersections of past with future. Fears of rejection, loss and isolation clashed with determination to offer the best of one's efforts, hoping to be received and appreciated in the offering. At times, a sense of agency was seriously called into question by the walking group, tempting the members to relinquish the goal of making it a multi-ethnic group. Shanta also vacillated between her strong desire to contribute by being involved and her fatigue and concern for her new baby as their visa expired. As I was asked at times to contribute in ways that were unfamiliar to me, I also felt the tension of wanting to give, and yet having my own fears or hesitations. Hope involved the working out of these contradicting influences.

Community Center and "Anil ji"

In Chapter Three, I have briefly described the Community Center in which I observed the Christian worship inculturated in traditionally Hindu practices (Satsang) two times a month for the duration of my study. There, I also introduced "Anil," the leader of the Satsang, who willingly allowed me to interview him after each visit. In the context of the Center and within those interviews with Anil, I found constant examples of the hope for contribution by those in the diaspora.

The Center was tucked into a little corner storefront in Chicago. The first steps inside offered a warm greeting to one's olfactory senses at most times of the day, whether that be from incense, a hosted lunch of locally made Indian vegetarian cuisine or just the light scent of cardamom in the chai that was refilled in large dispensers 2-3 times a day. The walls were lined with books about Islam, Hinduism and Christianity. There were videos

and Bibles, pamphlets and CDs available to be borrowed, and some were even free for visitors to keep. Computer, printers, tables and chairs filled the room and were available for the use of students coming for tutoring. All coming to the prayer services were welcomed to sit and chat afterwards, enjoying a cup of chai and some snacks together. In a side room, many of the group activities were held, such as monthly Bible studies for women, and eventually the Satsang or Aarti (prayer and worship services) that were offered daily. There was also a small office that was used for prayer, private meetings and as storage for ritually important equipment and supplies. It was in that small prayer room that I learned much about the Center's history and present hopes and practices.

When he arrived at the Center about 9 years ago, Anil had already been practicing inculturated worship with Hindus and Christians together in Michigan, a state to the north east of Chicago. After arriving in Chicago, he attended a meeting at the Center held to discuss the issues they were having with Hindu visitors' lack of interest in returning after a first visit. When Anil suggested that the Center allow him to offer contextualized, or inculturated, worship, there was a strong reaction against it. For many at the Center, especially those who had come from Hindu backgrounds, Anil's style and synthesis seemed antithetical to Christian practice because it seemed synchronistic to those at the meeting. Yet, the board at the Center could not ignore the fact that everything they had offered thus far by way of sharing the Gospel with Hindus had been rejected, and possibly considered offensive. Collins provides two divergent views on the relationship between Christ and culture that seem to characterize the positions that the Board was straddling. "On the one hand," he writes, "the relationship is seen in terms of the

determining effects of Christ's uniqueness, and thus the discontinuity; while on the other hand the relationship is seen in terms of a parity which is characteristically expressed in a positive view of multiculturalism."[270] During a series of meetings with the board, they required Anil to defend every one of the culturally embodied Hindu practices and liturgical utterances that he utilized in his worship of Jesus using specific Biblical texts. Eventually, the board of the Center agreed that Anil's approach was, in fact, a more "Biblical" way in which Hindus could meet Jesus. Further, they agreed that the cultural factors of the West that they had adopted and allowed to define their notions of Christianity were not only expendable, but also truly inhibiting in communicating the message they hoped to send.

Interestingly, the description E. Stanley Jones wrote about Indian resistance to Christianity in 1925 still seems to characterize what was taking place at the Center before Anil arrived to start the Satsang services.[271] Jones summarizes H.A. Miller's concept of "oppression psychosis"[272] by explaining that those who have been dominated by a group culturally and politically are left in an aggravated mental state that makes it almost impossible for that group to openly accept or acknowledge any positive aspects of the oppressive group. Jones suggests that while some Indians can be open to Jesus, receiving messages about Jesus from others in western contexts is difficult, if not impossible. He wrote, "India can now take from Christ because she is able to disassociate him from the West, but she finds it difficult to take from the Christian church or from missionaries, for

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[270] Paul Collins. *Christian Inculturation in India*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 64.
[271] E. Stanley Jones. *The Christ of the Indian Road*. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1925).
[272] Herbert Miller. "The Oppression Psychosis and the Immigrant." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 93, no. 1 (January 1921): 139–44.

in these cases, the disassociation is not easy."[273] In a chapter on "The Imperialist Hangover," Goel suggests that even after western countries evacuated some locations, Christian mission to expand Christianity into people groups all over the world continued to exude Imperialist arrogance. "It is still suffering from in imperialist hangover," Goel writes, "It had once confused the superiority of Western arms with the superiority of the Christian creed." He continues, "The Christian mission used to proclaim with considerable pride how many heathens it had killed or forced into the fold, how many orphans it had collected and baptised, how many pagan temples it had demolished…"[274] Despite all the political and social change between India and "the West" since 1925, this Center was seeming to experience the same ineffectual state eighty and ninety years later. Informants from the Center suggested that Hindus were particularly not interested in discursive debate or confrontation about religious practice, perhaps because of the inclusive tendencies of those in the Hindu tradition to graft in whatever new spiritual ideas or characters arose historically. Perhaps, they speculated, that those in the Abrahamic religions, such as the Muslims that visited, might be more comfortable with debates about theology, faith practice and tradition because those traditions tended to be less inclusive historically. Because of this apparent disparity in perspective and communication preferences, the Center decided to differentiate its approaches in presenting the Gospel to Hindus and to Muslims.

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[273] *Ibid.,102.*
[274] Sita Ram Goel. *Catholic Ashrams: Sannyasins or Swindlers, with New Appendices*. (New Delhi: Voice of India, 2009), 70-71.

Anil began to lead worship once a week initially, and increased it steadily to daily services by the time my research began. Upon my first visit to the Center, I realized it had to be a central part of my research for a number of reasons, a key reason being the fact that the Center offers a melding of people from many different backgrounds and faith practices. Many practicing Hindus including a priest employed at a local Hindu temple attend regularly, as do many local Christians and many students from a local Bible institution. Visitors from far off come regularly because they have connections to ministry in India, and random people from the streets of Chicago stopped in for a free cup of chai. In my first interview with Anil, he almost insisted that I return, and promised that I would learn much more than I could if I focused only on the dichotomous locations of Hindu and Christian settings that hardly overlapped. He also offered that he could help me learn Hindi, include me in the regular tutoring or interviews he offered to whomever was visiting, and perhaps even start helping me to learn some of the Sanskrit chants, as he does with many students who come to the Center as interns.

The contextualized Christian worship services were held in the side room of the Center. The Satsang services offered are similar each day, but the main speakers and excerpts from the Gospel texts are rotated. Different individuals are also spontaneously called upon each service to help lead various parts. Large orange cloths were spread out across the center of the floor. A few chairs lined the sides of the room and floor cushions were spread out on the cloths. A basket of headscarves for women choosing to cover their heads during worship, and a bin of hand instruments were available, along with piles of song and liturgy booklets. At the front of the room, Anil often sat cross legged on the

floor, clothed in saffron[275] and wearing bangles and *tilaka, or* white lines placed across his forehead connoting spiritual devotion[276,] giving him the appearance of a Hindu priest. The service began with the blowing of a conch shell. Afterwards, he played a harmonium while leading chants, and sometimes visitors would play tablas. Most women covered their heads with scarves, and wore traditional Indian clothes, such as saris or shalwar kameez. Some wore jeans with a long shirt.

During the services, Anil and others led songs from the songbooks in Hindi and Sanskrit. Many Hindus, Anil explained, use the same melodies that we sang at the Center to worship to Jesus, but have likewise adapted the words to be relevant to their own local deities. Indeed, I had heard the same songs in many occasions at Hindu worship events with the words fashioned to the deity in focus. I came to realize that Anil ji,[277] as he was most often addressed at the center,[278] had creatively adapted many of the words and practices to theologically align with Christian doctrine.

During the service, we also spent time reciting passages in Sanskrit, English and Hindi in the liturgy books, and listening to a leader dramatically narrate a portion of scripture from

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[275] Saffron, or reddish-orange can symbolize purity, the quest for knowledge or the godhead when worn by priests. It is symbolic of fire, which burns away ignorance, darkness and impurity.

[276] According the worship leader, *tilak* are recognized as housing a nerve point in the body. Certain lines signify certain religious affiliations, but generally, lines across the foreheard (ajna chakra) or pointing upwards suggest that the individual is committed to the preservation of energy from the entry/exit point of our soul, and the pointing of thoughts upward.

[277] "Ji" is a suffix used with a name or a title to show respect, in Hindi and many other languages of the Indian subcontinent; used as an affectionate honorific or placed at the end of a name to denote affection. *(Etymology Sanskrit* जीव *(jīva)= "'life", "soul", "existence'" Suffix –ji Hindi* जी *(jī) = "'heart", "mind", "yes", "yes sir", "honorific suffix'")* "Hindi Translation of "-Ji': Collins English-Hindi Dictionary." Hindi Translation of "-ji" | Collins English-Hindi Dictionary. Accessed October 1, 2019. https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-hindi/ji.

[278] Anil likewise added the suffix to the name of all other adults at the center as well, including my own, demonstrating mutual respect.

the Gospels. For example, on my first visit, Anil ji shared about a woman being healed by the touching of Jesus' robe as he traveled through a crowd to heal a dying young girl.[279] Anil's head bobbled a bit in a characteristically Indian gesture as he dramatized the words he imagined the disciples might have spoken with some exasperation when Jesus asked who, in that tightly packed crowd, had touched him. He enacted, "Many people are pressing in all around us, Yesu ji. How can you ask who has touched you? Many people are touching all of us!" Together with the other listeners, I was asked to imagine the sights, smells, sounds and emotional realities that were a part of the story about the healing of this woman who had been longing to draw near to God but had been prevented by the cultural mandate to keep distant because her bleeding was considered unclean. Jesus, by his availability outside of the temple in a place that was comfortable and culturally acceptable for her to meet him, made it possible for her to draw near. Though not directly articulated, the underlying message for the Christians attending this service was a challenge to consider how to likewise be available in a place that was not a "temple" or Christian church that can feel culturally inappropriate or uncomfortable for many Hindus to enter.

This process of inculturation expressed in liturgy and ritual is certainly not unique to Anil and the center. Historically, many branches of the Christian church have examined cultural communication issues and attempted to make adjustments in liturgical expression and ritual use to help the message of the Gospel be more understandable, and perhaps more acceptable to those who receive it. Paul Collins, in *Christian Inculturation in India*,

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[279] Taken from Mark 5:25-34 New International Version (NIV)

gives several examples of intentional inculturation such as the East Syrian, or Malabar liturgy, which contested the influence of the Latin Rite, as it sought to reflect an "authentic" or "indigenous" rite in India.[280] Collins further describes attempts to contextualize the Catholic Mass for India, which has incorporated into Christian Eucharist practices such as an entrance procession where a tray of flowers and a small lamp are brought to the priest. This mirrors practices of *puja*, or worship, by Brahmin priests in temples, according to Collins.[281] The Bible is garlanded and incensed, and all sit on the floor. Collins provides evidence that Hindu phraseology is considered to be part of the Mass for India as well. Christian Ashrams are a further example of an even more thoroughly contextualized practice of Christianity in India. Ashrams, such as Shantivanam, entail "a conscious bringing together of Hindu and Christian traditions," such as following the way of Hindu sannyasa, a lifestyle that involves taking vows which might include simplicity and poverty, wearing saffron-colored robes, and walking barefoot.[282] *Baumann revisits* Gravend-Tirole's historical examples of contextualized Christian worship. He discusses the limitations of inculturation since the 1980's, mapping the decline in attempts to contextualize since that time.[283] As one example, he describes Dalits struggling with western ideas of making the Gospel more available through contextualization because Christian theology has been hurtful to Dalits over time.[284] As Schweitzer suggests, "While Indian Christian theology repudiated the cultural imperialism often present in Western understandings of the Gospel, demanding a

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[280] Paul M Collins. *Christian Inculturation in India*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 234.
[281] *Ibid.*,152.
[282] *Ibid., 153.*
[283] Chad Bauman and Richard Fox Young. *Constructing Indian Christianities: Culture, Conversion, and Caste*. (New Delhi: Routledge, 2014), xix.
[284] *Ibid.*

recognition of Indian cultures and the spiritual insights of Hinduism, in the past it typically failed to address the injustice of caste oppression, which Hinduism supports."[285] *Clearly, complex issues regarding inculturation have been considered and attempted beyond Anil's efforts.*

For Anil, inculturation of the Christian message is a mandate that comes from the very life of Christ. He explained, that in entering the God-man state, Christ himself "inculturated" by translating the glory of God into human flesh, and then by communicating through the language and culture of those around him. Jesus' teaching was contextualized by his use of parables that encased eternal truths into common life stories about seeds, coins, sheep, family, and more.

To listen to Anil speak about most topics is akin to sitting down at a banquet. He seems to be able to pick up any random object in front of him to use as an analogy illustrating a point he would like to make, offering thoroughly analyzed layers and textures of information that provide a fullness to his explanations. There is a sense in which he has already considered and answered any question one can ask him because of the thorough and well-bespoken answers he is able to provide spontaneously at any given moment. Anil credits his father as the origin of any wisdom he has accumulated. His father, whom Anil described as a great reader and thinker, was a south Indian Christian who had relocated his family to the north of India to purposefully live among Hindu neighbors.

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[285] Don Schweitzer. "Two Theological Movements in India That Complicate Western Reformed Identities." *Toronto Journal of Theology* 28, no. 2 (2012): 217–233.

Anil's father's father had been a Hindu in the south who had been visited by a missionary teaching about Jesus in their community. After this missionary left, Anil's grandfather became a leader in local discussions about how to best communicate to their own people what they had come to know and love about Jesus. Clearly, Anil had been raised in an atmosphere that challenged him to be thoughtful and to practice his life with great intention.

In describing his own sense of identity, Anil began by explaining that he views himself like the *masala daba*, or vessel that houses many smaller containers with spices that are often used in curry dishes. This, he suggested, is much like his Indian heritage out of which he has to pinch small bits of his identity.

He continued,

> I am from India and I am Christian. I am also Hindu but my own Hinduism is different from [another's]. I am taking cultural/social aspect but not theological. I have not thrown my theological aspect out the window. I have taken from Hindu spiritual aspect…rituals, vocabularies, symbols, and use them to express myself. I have a very particular theology that sets me apart from another Hindu. But at the same time, I have things from the same heritage. The dish I created is a very particular dish…I am creating…not just a dish…but basically a kind of medicine…we are all having a problem and we all need medicine which is provided by Lord Jesus. Antidote that he has prepared is the only antidote that will work. Some things are pulled out from that heritage, and I'm trying to express what that looks like. I am Indian…I am American…I am Hindu…and I am Christian. Yes to all, but there is a particular theology that I will never deny. I have flexibility and all Indians have flexibility…so I am using it. But not with theology. This is *very rigid…Jesus…sin…evil and supernatural, triune God.*

Over the 18 months I spent visiting the Center, I had many conversations with Anil asking him to explain the many rituals and symbols he included in his service, as well as the order of liturgy, the way he approached specific items used in the services, the choice of volunteers, and the readings that were a part of the daily practices. I wanted to know

how he managed possible concerns such as manipulation or power differences inherent in ritual use, especially when combining traditions.

In one interview in particular, we focused on the intentional use of liturgy and ritual that was manifest in Anil's approach to ministry. Initially, Anil communicated he did not believe rituals were intrinsically valuable. He said:

> There is an inherent tendency for rituals to die. But that does not mean that they are good for nothing. Even people die. Rituals have a lifespan and we can prolong their life. How do we do that? We keep it alive by presenting the living Word during every ritual. If we don't present the living Word, if our story, the Gospel, is not presented at the same time, the ritual will certainly die. Living ritual is then thrown out with dead ritual.

While Anil ji agreed with many ritual theorists[286] that there is definite and specific agential value to rituals, he emphasized that he did not find rituals themselves to have meaningful power if divorced from the presence of God through simultaneous presentation of texts from the Bible. Once this was established, however, Anil continued to suggest that incorporating contextualized ritual and liturgy enhanced his communication and the opportunity for visitors to encounter Jesus. First, he suggested, Satsang ritual is important because it encourages devotion in those attending by virtue of allowing them to participate, learn and contribute even if they are completely unfamiliar with the Christian tradition. He elaborated,

> Rituals allow participation for those who do not know anything if they can understand the format. Without it, people become spectators. Foreign. Rituals create familiarity and a sense of expectation. Certain people have been excluded from participating or even attending at time [in Church services], but when we include them and give them a place of prominence, it elevates them. When you participate, you learn a little deeper. Both verbally and in action…helps you learn. Gives voice.

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[286] For example, Durkheim's model suggesting that ritual can be used to control social environments and create solidarity in a community, Geertz's notion that ritual fuses the lived world with the world that is imagined or Tambiah's assertion that ritual can communicate institutional values.

Yet, the liturgy used was intentionally written by Anil to ensure that the message desired is still communicated. "If we open it without format," Anil continued, "other things will enter that will contradict the message. With ritual, we can allow people to participate with some safety to stay on message."

Further, Anil has intentionally involved attendees on specific levels, leading or following as he determined would be most helpful for the individual and the group. Even for those who felt spontaneously chosen to read a passage out of a booklet or to play an instrument, often there was a specific intention for Anil's request; participatory acts were given to help visitors know they could make a contribution to the service. This perspective of participatory value in ritual as allowing participants to feel a sense of active engagement overlaps with perspectives of ritual theorists, such as Grimes. All in Anil's services were invited to be "ritual actors," to use Grimes' expression.[287] Grimes describes the flow of contributory participation by ritual performers,

> Ritualists are not only performers acting among or in front of others; they accomplish things. An agent is one who acts—sometimes strategically, sometimes naively—to effect or inhibit change. Because everyone, even the most passive participant, exercises some kind of agency, all participants are doers… Some actors are leaders; others are followers. Still others both lead and follow. It is not uncommon for participants to shift between leading and following. [288]

Anil elaborated that the participation was not simply to get attendees to feel like they were contributing, however. He longed to allow them not only to "effect or inhibit change," but to be in contact with the power of God by directly reading Biblical scripture

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[287] Ronald Grimes. *The Craft of Ritual Studies*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 248.
[288] *Ibid.*

or singing Jesus' name, both which he believed directly invited the participants into God's presence.

> Participation is important because there is something that happens when you speak out loud in praise and worship to God. There is a limited and specific value in silent meditation but even more value when someone utters the name of Jesus or a portion of the Word of God. Because God created by the use of his oracle, his spoken Word, when it is spoken, it goes out with a certain power. So they interact with a living *word and* powers of darkness take a back seat.

Anil's intention was to include optional opportunities for involvement for those wanting to move toward Jesus, while also allowing distance for anyone feeling unsure or uncomfortable. He wanted to create a safe community for people to come and be involved to they extent they chose, while also using ritual to signify those who were in leadership. He explained,

> Ritual binds the community together. Allows a little bit of hierarchy. We can make the structure as flat as possible. Some [pre-selected] people tell stories [from the Bible] and the community knows that these people give our spiritual message. Creates respect for those who are leaders. We ask our regular members to participate in something that makes them feel important. Sometimes Hindus even do the benediction.

As with the walking club, certain levels of involvement were moderated at which attendees could participate or be in leadership. Here, though, exercising control was necessary to ensure that the service was confined to the theological parameters of the Christian message, and some attempt was made to signpost leadership so that visitors might realize whom to approach if they wished to understand more about the message of the Gospel.

Anil recognized that ritual use can accomplish far more than merely establishing social control or the establishment of hierarchical power that some ritual theorists might assert. A sense of belonging, the development of community, and providing a structure within

which attendees could select their own level of involvement were all possible through the use of the Satsang ritual. Catherine Bell concurs, stating,

> *Ritualization is very inadequately grasped by the notion of social control. Ritualization is not a matter of transmitting shared beliefs, instilling a dominant ideology as an internal subjectivity, or even providing participants with the concepts to think with. The particular construction and interplay of power relationships affected by ritualization defines, empowers, and constrains. Ritualized practices, of necessity, require the external consent of participants while simultaneously tolerating a fair degree of internal resistance. As such, they do not function as an instrument of heavy-handed social control….In terms of its scope, dependence, and legitimization, the type of authority formulated by ritualization tends to make ritual activities effective in grounding and displaying a sense of community without overriding the autonomy of the individuals or subgroups.*[289]

I had wondered at times if Hindus might feel manipulated by Anil's use of rituals that are more often associated with worship in Hindu contexts. As mentioned above, Goel describes a fundamental distrust with the ashrams and other attempts at contextualized Christianity within India, "The present Catholic ashrams have inherited a history of intrigue and subterfuge," Goel writes, "Hindus who have heard these semantic posturings and seen Hindu children slowly drawn away from their faith criticise this approach as clever maneuvering."[290] I was curious if the same distrust or sense of maneuvering might also be experienced and voiced by the diaspora in Chicago. Anil responded to my inquiry by explaining that manipulation was never his intention, nor had anyone ever communicated that they felt manipulated by him. He said his use of ritual was "not manipulation, but boundaries." He continued by using the analogy that the Center itself has walls and a street address. By those, visitors can find it, know when they enter and what to expect inside. He said that the theological and practical boundaries are consistent

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[289] Catherine Bell and Diane Jonte-Pace. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 221-222.
[290] Sita Ram Goel *Catholic Ashrams: Sannyasins or Swindlers, with New Appendices*, 82 and 86.

and clearly defined and articulated, not hidden. His use of ritual and liturgy was meant to clarify, not mask, his message.

Anil and I also discussed his understanding of power dynamics within the community. We considered how words found in the western Christian church, within songs and liturgy, can connote a desire for power, competition, domination and even war (e.g. "winning" people to Christ, being "soldiers for Christ," "victory in Jesus"). I asked him about how he viewed power differentials as the leader of the Satsang ministry, specifically. He responded, "The Biblical idea of power will change the question. We are given a command to communicate, rather than God just using angels. It is a privilege to partner with God. Love is commanded. Many Christians do not actively love Hindus. We have a command, though, not just to share about Jesus, but also to love. Christ says to love. We communicate because the teaching of Jesus has altered us. Even if the door is completely closed, I still need to find a way to communicate." He went on to explain how someone with a knife has power to hurt someone or to cut vegetables to serve him or her. His hope was to communicate in such a way that he was like the man serving others food in bite size portion that can be digested.

During one meeting with Anil, I described how a Christian woman I knew, with an Indian son who was about to turn thirteen, wished to offer him a kind of coming of age rite of passage. Nothing was really offered in her current faith community. Anil was very excited by the chance to forge another kind of connection between Hindu tradition and the Christian Indian community. He created a liturgy and ritual celebration for a Christian

"threading" ceremony, or *Upanayana,* reinterpreted from that performed for Brahmin Hindu boys. Signifying that a Brahmin boy is now of a spiritually responsible age, the sacred thread, which has many names including the Sanskrit word "yajnopaveetam,"[291] is placed over the boy's left shoulder and continuously warn. The three-strand cotton cord has been interpreted differently according to location and tradition, but often signifies sacrifice or purity of thought, word and action. This was easily translatable for Anil ji, as he placed the thread on the Christian boy, suggesting that he now wear a symbol of the presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The service also included gifts for the boy, which are likewise given in the Upanayana. A Bible verse was presented by the leader, similar to the mantra given by a Guru in the Hindu celebration. A sacred fire was lit where the Christian boy symbolically placed his tendencies toward selfishness. This was modeled after a sacrificial fire in the Upanayana, provided as a place where the Hindu boy places alms collected from others, symbolizing his dependence on community. At the end of the service, there was a vegetarian meal shared by all from both Hindu and Christian traditions.

I took the opportunity, at this gathering, to ask two Hindu attendees how they felt about their cultural tradition being translated, in a sense, through a Christian theological lens.

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[291] *Yajnopaveetam* The word *Upa+nayana* means taking somebody near (upa) knowledge. In ancient times, after the ceremony was performed, the child was sent to the Guru's house (Gurukul) for education, where the child remained until completion of education. *Upanayana* has one other meaning, derived from Marathi words: *Upa na* (over/above)+*yan am* (it is), making the meaning "that which is above the shoulder." "UPANAYANA." New World Encyclopedia. Accessed December 5, 2019. https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/upanayana.

These were two women who had known each other for more than ten years in the suburban diaspora community, but had not befriended one another. One from the north of India and one from the south, they experienced their own set of cultural differences. Further, one was a professional, working outside of home very shortly after the birth of her son, and the other continued to stay at home ten years later. The latter felt judged and belittled by professional Indian women, she confessed. She had a college degree but chose to stay at home. She did not feel that was a decision many others in her diaspora community understood or esteemed. There were other differences as well, but they seemed to put all these aside during this Christian Upanayana, and they were sitting together afterwards when I approached them to inquire about their response. Not surprisingly, they had opposing perspectives. One viewed the event as a good opportunity for her son, who would be traveling to India soon to undergo his own Upanayana, to witness a gist of what it entailed, albeit in an American modified version. This translated version somehow was useful to her in helping her son navigate his fears about being "normal" as he tried to merge the intensified Brahmin Hindu identity he would be accepting through this rite in India with the suburban American identify he had adopted, seemingly devoid of tradition and symbolism for the most part. The other woman, however, felt that this Christian interpretation of Upanayana cheapened her rich heritage by what seemed like flippant changes made to millennium old texts. She was, she assured me, interested in Christianity expressed, but not through "her" traditions. She wanted to see Christianity observed by Americans, celebrated in churches with chairs and overhead lyrics projected so people could sing along with rock bands. She had been invited to such churches before, but had never managed to attend. The evening ended with everyone

departing except for the three of us still discussing their views of the Upanayana, and one man, a white friend of Anil's, who had just relocated to a nearby suburb. He joined us and shared an amazing personal story about being shot through the chest 10 years earlier in a parking lot in Chicago, and miraculously recovering. It was after that experience that he decided to go into full time Christian ministry, within the Hindu community.

A final emphasis that arose in my interviews with Anil entailed his strong hope to contribute more beyond the Satsang. He hoped to be an equipper of others who might multiply his efforts, and even more so, to found an organization that could initiate and support Satsang communities in many locations. While he loved what had transpired at the Center in terms of community and opportunity, Anil's real hope was to see it replicated so that its impact potential would extend beyond that small part of Chicago. After about 8 months at the Center, I saw part of Anil's vision of multiplication of his efforts realized. Anil's friend who had suffered the gunshot, along with his wife and their five children, had moved back into the Chicago area after doing ministry in India for 6 years. They loved to be involved in outreach to Hindus and had known Anil before they headed out to India. After intentionally purchasing a home in a suburb of Chicago that is heavily populated with Indian diaspora, they joined a local couple from Sri Lanka in offering a monthly Satsang in the home of the second couple. Over the next 8 months, I was able to attend this 5 times. Though it started with 6 people, there were about 25 people in attendance at my last visit, and many had come at least once before. They seemed to feel comfortable with each other and the format, having formed a kind of

community through the Satsang. While Anil was very excited about this replication of his efforts in Chicago, his visionary dreams for contribution are far more extensive.

There are obvious ways in which the Center, with its hope to serve the diaspora community in Chicago demonstrated the hope to make a contribution by these diaspora members. Likewise, Anil, through his hope to communicate Jesus through inculturated services demonstrated the hope to make a contribution to the salvation and spiritual growth of those who attended. This hope is, once again, complex as it carries the one hoping through valleys of disappointment and to heights of successes. For both the Center and for Anil ji, there have been periods of reflection upon how well their efforts at contribution have been received and if they are making a meaningful difference through their contributions. In hoping for contribution, they have questioned their agency at times, and had to defend it to others and themselves. Backwards and forwards movement in the process has caused them to retreat and reevaluate, to reflect on past traditions and histories, to resurrect the good and beautiful and merge it with the present.

Susan and Joseph at a Conservative South Indian Christian Congregation

I met "Susan" and "Joseph" at a South Indian Christian church in the middle class suburbs of Chicago which gathers in a conference room of a hotel on Sunday mornings, and in homes of attendees during the weekdays for various other meetings. Most of the attendees are from Kerala, a southern coastal Indian state.

Compared with ICC, I found this protestant church to be fairly conservative in practice and in theology. The women cover their heads with a small lace cloth. The terminology used in the service is very religious in tone, with little attempt at translation or explanation of the terms used for anyone outside the community.[292] The services are conducted in English, utilizing hymnals and choruses that churches in the US have been using since the 1970's. All are welcomed to offer a prayer, a song suggestion or theological thought openly and spontaneously during parts of the service. The same prayers, songs and thoughts seemed to be reiterated by those who shared, demonstrating an intense homogeneity in this congregation. Reflections on the cost of Jesus' life, suffering and death for our sin, the gift and joy of salvation for those who would acknowledge this and redemption from our sinful nature were regularly mentioned, and indicative of the ethos of their worship.

Though Susan was the only other non-Indian person who was ever at the church when we were present, the congregation was very welcoming and accepting of my family of six visiting. Sometimes arriving late due to distance and traffic, we caused ushers to leap up, arranging more chairs and handing us hymnals as we entered. Many people in the church have been a part of this congregation for decades. They have not connected with other Indian Christian congregations or with Indian Sikhs, Hindus or Muslims in the area. Brown writes, "Very little research has been done on South Asian Christian groups in the diaspora. What there is suggests that most of the Christian South Asians in the diaspora

[292] For example, prayers of thanksgiving for God's "saving blood," "redemption," "sanctifying work," and "atonement for our sins" were often spoken aloud with a general sense of agreement expressed by others through nodding their heads in response.

form distinct social groups who have little to do with other South Asians."[293] I often wondered if the tightly held congregational subgroup boundary was a response to fear of influence from wider majority cultural trends or if it might have been residually remaining from a defensive stance taken in India resulting from increasing anti-Christian violence.

The youth attending this church come with their families. They are quiet and respectful and were very welcoming of my own children. Most of the teens and even some younger children sit with paper and pen, taking notes during the service. During one mid-week meeting, I saw them all huddled together on the stairs of the house that was hosting the event, laughing and leaning upon each other like a close group of siblings. These kids have been raised with their lives intimately entwined in this environment, witnessing the devotion and intentional commitments of their parents. In addition to the fact that the church consists of many middle class families that are related or have known one another for many years, relatives of the young people back in India are also connected in many ways. There were times we visited when 30 or more people from the congregation, including teenagers, were all in India attending the same wedding. The identity of these young men and women as Indian and Christian was clearly reinforced by the "habitus" of this church environment. In using Bourdieu's term in reference to this church, I am suggesting that an embodiment and carrying forward of the commitments and perceptions of the older generations was manifest in the youth that have been raised in the social

[293] Judith Brown. *Global South Asians : Introducing the modern Diaspora*, 95.

environment of this church. Elaine Power summarizes the meaning of Bourdieu's term succinctly,

> Habitus is a way of describing the embodiment of social structures and history in individuals. It is a set of dispositions, internal to the individual, that both reflects external social structures and shapes how the individual perceives the world and acts in it. Although the social structures embodied in habitus do not determine behaviour, the individual is predisposed to act in accordance with the social structures.[294]

The young members in this congregation watched and attended the events in which the older members continually had served for years and would continue to serve. Though the teenagers could ultimately choose to participate or abstain in these events, the expectation was clear that they would join, and they seemed to be involved without hesitation.

In particular, service to the poor and needy was an expectation that was ingrained in the culture and habitus of the church. The hope for contribution was very distinctly manifest through their acts of service. Every fourth Sunday, most members participated in activities that started at 7 or 8am and continued until 8pm. Like all Sundays, they arrived at the hotel to set up sound equipment and chairs for the service. Some prepared food for the mid-service snack and fellowship time. Some drove long distances. There was a prayer group that met at 8am, Sunday School started at 9am and was followed by church from 10-12pm. After church, most members typically went home unless it was the fourth Sunday of the month. On those weeks, groups would quickly buy lunch from a local restaurant and head to a nursing home where they offered a worship service to the people residing there. They sang, preached, prayed for the older people and offered friendship.

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[294] Elaine Power. "An Introduction to Pierre Bourdieu's Key Theoretical Concepts." *Journal for the Study of Food and Society* 3, no. 1 (1999): 48-52.

After this, members quickly grabbed dinner either by stopping home briefly or going to another restaurant, and then most continued on to a mission for the homeless. There, they served soup, preached and prayed for the people who were there for the night. In both the nursing home and the homeless shelter, the preacher would offer an "altar call" asking if anyone who heard the message wanted to submit the control of their lives to God, to ask for forgiveness for sins and to pray that Jesus would enter their hearts. Each fourth Sunday, there was a positive response to their message, and the preacher would connect the three or four individuals who responded with workers at the nursing home or shelter, who would then follow up with the individuals who prayed. The young members were always involved in these efforts.

Another way that this church demonstrated their hope for contribution was by inviting and hosting individuals from India who would benefit from presenting their needs or ministry to American churches, in an effort to generate prayer and financial support. During my visits, I heard one emotional speaker from Kerala involved in lifelong ministry who was struggling financially due to the medical needs of his daughter. He had exhausted all of the resources in India available to him. This church offered to bring him to the US to help him raise money so that he could continue on in ministry and afford care for his child. The church paid for his flight, gave him housing, helped him arrange many church visits, and took a collection for him.

On another occasion, a man came who led a leper ministry in Haryana, close to New Delhi. He explained to the congregation during the service that the children of lepers will

get the disease if cared for by their leprous mothers. His ministry offered the opportunity for the parents to put their children in a nearby home to be raised away from the disease, but close enough to still visit their parents on occasion with minimal contact. He wept as he communicated the difficult emotions that had to be navigated in this ministry, supporting parents, who had already suffered severe personal losses, as they made decisions about how to raise their children. They all understood that the children would suffer losses by staying with the parents or by being taken away. He took a collection for the ministry and handed pamphlets out to the congregation, asking us to share with others about this ministry. This connection back to India created a sense of global contribution or mission in this church beyond the social and spiritual impact they hoped to bring to nearer ministry locations. Yet, a sense of solidarity or loyalty that this particular group felt for their ethnic heritage was reinforced since almost all international guests were from India, contributing to the needs of their original homeland. The hope to make a contribution for the adult members, and the young ones through their participation in the habitus of the church events and culture, and to the local and global society in the form of active mission, was clearly evident in this church.

Interestingly, Samta Pandya suggests that it is a combination of habitus and societal involvement that have brought a resurgence of religion to post-secular India and the diaspora through missions such as the Chinmaya Mission and other "guru cultures.[295]" Pandya demonstrates that the mobilizing and motivating presence of a guru, along with the support and participation of disciples in addressing societal needs mixed with the call

[295] Samta Pandya. "'Guru' Culture in South Asia: The Case of Chinmaya Mission in India." *Society and Culture in South Asia* 2, no. 2 (2016): 204–32.

to stand for national interests is key to reinvigorating faith movements in a post-secular age. The global interest of Chinmaya Mission is also highlighted, while the commitment to Indian heritage remains in focus.

The Indian church in Chicago that I was visiting seemed to have created a similar habitus and societal interest at both the Indian national level and global level, and they extended the constant invitation for their young to be a part of the habitus of their own faith movement. However, they seemed to be missing a leader to do the work of translating texts and traditions in a new context for the younger members, as Pandya suggests a guru often does for new devotees. While this church would not advocate the deification of any leader, the need for a guru according to the Sanskrit meaning ("someone who is a teacher of certain knowledge[296]") was still needed. The leaders of the congregation knew they needed to fill this role in order to keep their young members invested, and they believed that Joseph and his wife could fill it successfully.

Susan and Joseph were relatively new to the congregation. Joseph is originally from Mumbai, but came to the US as a teenager. Acclimating to life in America was fairly easy since he had been exposed to the English language and western cultural ideas through the Catholic school he had attended, and through watching American television in Mumbai. Like Anil, Joseph's grandparents had been the first converts to Christianity, and had been likewise intentional and active in their faith. Throughout the 1970's and 1980's, Joseph was trained in Christian apologetics and loved to discuss deeper theological nuances and

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[296] *Ibid.*

implications of scripture with other young men in school or church. Despite this intellectual intensity, Joseph presented as very playful and young at heart even at around 60 years old. It was clear he kept up with youth trends in the Indian diaspora in broader America. He had boundless energy and had just retired. Susan is a white woman who was quick to confess that she married Joseph after having been married once previous to their marriage. She had two sons by her first husband followed by another two sons with Joseph after they married. She described Joseph as a heroic father to all four boys, demonstrating deep admiration for him as she talked about the ways he has been a huge blessing in all of their lives.

Since the church services did not offer opportunities to have longer personal conversations, I invited Susan and Joseph to have dinner at my home so that I could hear more about their lives and the new ministry role that Joseph had agreed to take on at the church. Over dinner, Susan and Joseph shared the difficulties they had with retirement such as attaining insurance coverage for prescription medication and qualifying for a house loan. Frustratingly, these life issues made it difficult to attend to activities at the church, the very reason for their living in Chicago. Joseph began to elaborate how they had come to be involved in this church by first stating there were three kinds of immigrants present in the Indian Christian diaspora in Chicago: 1) those completely unable to acclimatize, 2) those who might know English but are committed to keeping the Indian culture a large part of their lives, and 3) the second and third generation Indians who are almost more American than Indian, just trying to figure out what it means to be American, Indian and Christian in the postmodern world. This last group, especially the

youth among them, was a deep concern for Joseph and Susan. Recognizing that the negotiation of religious traditions is particularly challenging in all the areas of life which South Asians must negotiate cultural identity, Brown writes,

> All young South Asians have to negotiate cultural differences in the locations which are now their home, dealing with their parents and their assumptions about the good and proper life, but also facing out to a wider world where they have new connections, role models and opportunities. Of considerable significance is the way they respond to the religious traditions of their parents, and discern whether those traditions can provide them with meaning and guidance in their new homelands.[297]

Immigrants of other religions have to negotiate these influences as well. For example, in discussing sexual behavior norms on college campuses, Mir addresses the negotiations of faith practice and adherence to values that Muslim students underwent. With regard to expressions of sexuality and faith-driven commitments to chastity, Mir states, "Muslim women often tried to be normal, and to cover Islamic practices from their undergraduate peers, but sometimes they performed the total difference expected of them."[298] Faith negotiations for immigrant youth are complex. Joseph and Susan saw this, and they did not want to leave the youth to negotiate this complexity without guidance and support.

When dinner had ended, we went into my living room with some chai and sat while they shared their life stories. Joseph explained that, after college, he had been involved in a campus Bible study for young people in the town where he was living. There he met Susan, whom he found to be a curious, intellectually rigorous friend. Eventually, they began to date. Susan had been a Catholic turned agnostic. She married a man at a very

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[297] Judith M Brown. *Global South Asians : Introducing the modern Diaspora*, 173.
[298] Shabana Mir. *Muslim American Women on Campus: Undergraduate Social Life and Identity*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 152.

young age and had two sons with him before they moved to the west coast from a mid-western state. One day, her first husband stated that he no longer desired Susan or their sons to remain in his home, and suggested that she take the boys and go back to the Midwest without him. Heartbroken, she did, and they divorced. In the years that followed, she began to search for God through many faiths and sects. She spent lots of time talking through scriptures and texts with Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, who visited her regularly. She recalls those visits with a wistful appreciation for the kindness and authentic concern that those who visited demonstrated. However, as she put it, her "heart's emptiness was not answered" by the information she gained from those visits, so she continued to explore other faith traditions. Eventually, a friend at a bank where she was employed mentioned a Bible study that she was attending. Susan asked if she might also attend one week, and the friend consented to take her. It was there that she began her relationship with Jesus, and also where she met Joseph, and began to date him.

After several months of their dating, Joseph's family in the US, as well as those who were still in India, offered to arrange marriage between Joseph and a woman living in India. His relatives were not pleased that he was dating a girl in the US, though they knew very little about Susan at the time. Joseph was also feeling uncertain about the relationship with Susan, so they decided to end it. He agreed to have his marriage arranged with a woman from India. His relatives began to search for an Indian family with a daughter that Joseph might like to marry. They scrutinized the education, family line, faith tradition and many other aspects of individuals that they believed might work well as a marriage partner for Joseph. Eventually, Joseph began to converse regularly via

phone with a woman they had chosen. She was a "kind, good person," but eventually Joseph started to realize that she was just tolerating, not enjoying, his theological passions as Susan had done. He felt that he might be boring her, and he felt a bit bored himself. So Joseph called off the engagement process with the woman in India, and sought to renew the relationship with Susan. His family was shocked and angry. Though they were embarrassed that he had called off the engagement, they were even more upset to find out that he was dating Susan again. Worst of all, they learned Susan was a white, divorced, American woman with two children. It took years for his family to accept Susan and for their families to begin to relate with a sense of harmony.

Now about 40 years later, Joseph and Susan sat casually on my living room floor with all that behind them. Their four sons are all grown and very successful, regularly requesting that Joseph and Susan relocate to live by one of their families who resided in four separate, large US cities. Their boys agree that the couple should live near at least some of their grandchildren. Joseph confided that since he had just retired, he was no longer earning much money. His sons assured him that he could work for one of them, but Joseph feels" led" to stay in Chicago where he and Susan are committed to the church. Joseph had been teaching Sunday School and preaching with some regularity, but was deeply concerned about the young people. He had recognized a gap between the kind of cloistered, "out of touch and modern" approach to the faith that was happening at the church and expressions of postmodernity all around them. Joseph was referencing the church's approach to knowledge and communication of faith which he believed might be outdated and ineffectual for the young people in their outside worlds. Using MacIntyre's

imaginary "disquieting suggestion"[299] of a world in which scientific evidence had disappeared but was still propagated out of context from remnants and fragments of scientific knowledge remaining in the minds of a few, Myron Bradley Penner suggests that this futile effort is analogous to the ways in which Christians have been attempting to communicate their Gospel message in postmodern contexts. The use of language is one example of an issue that Penner addresses. "My goal is to reorient the discussion of Christian belief and change a well-entrenched vocabulary that simply does not work anymore, whatever its past uses may have been." He continues, "My incentive comes from a deep conviction that the modern apologetic paradigm does not have the ability to witness *truthfully* to Christ in our postmodern situation."[300] Susan and Joseph shared this view, and together, they hoped to support the young people in knowing and communicating Jesus within the surrounding postmodern culture. Fellow Chicago resident Sam George, who is likewise committed to serving young Asian Christians, suggests that the Christianity conveyed in many Indian churches is simply the continuation of a church culture rather than the gospel message of radical transformation of lives by walking with Jesus. "The church," he states, "becomes the socialization vehicle to nurture the next generation in the culture and not necessarily Biblical faith.[301]" Joseph hopes that he and Susan can be very strategic links in bringing about awareness of real faith and training to the teenagers of the church, especially 3rd generation Indians, in reaching out into the community and world. He hopes to discuss with them how they can

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[299] Alasdair MacIntyre. *After Virtue: a Study in Moral Theory*, 1.
[300] Myron B Penner. *The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 1.
[301] Sam George. *Understanding the Coconut Generation: Ministry to the Americanized Asian Indians*. (Huntley, IL: Mall Publishing, 2006), 138.

retain their Indianness, remain strong in their Christian faith *and* become 21st century-relevant citizens. Susan and Joseph agree with George's perspective that many Indian churches have not properly addressed the "complexities of the Indian American mind," which renders it difficult for young people to adequately merge identities of faith, the previous culture of their elders, and the current, post-modern cultural influences. Since immigrant protestant congregations tend to embody practices such as the performance of music, sharing of ethnic food and wearing clothing that reinforce connections to homeland,[302] this process is particularly difficult for them to negotiate in a multi-cultural or postmodern host setting. Like Sam George, Joseph and Susan saw that the lack of understanding between generational approaches to faith drives wedges between generations and contributes to the increasing dropout rate by the young people growing up in immigrant churches. Harkening back to the church I referred to as "ICC" in Chapter Four, some churches have attempted to address this through changing the style of dress in the congregation or through intentional selection of music. Similarly, Gerardo Marti examines the role of worship as a possible area of "radicalized ritual inclusion," which is his label for the attempts of leaders in churches to incorporate racial and ethnic groups by changing actions of members that symbolize racial inclusion. Marti suggests that it "involves understanding the pervasiveness of racial and ethnic notions of difference, rather than merely stressing unity on the basis of religious similarity."[303] Addressing these issues in the Indian church is a complex, triggering emotional and spiritual

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[302] R. Stephen. Warner. *A Church of Our Own: Disestablishment and Diversity in American Religion*. (New Brunswick, NJ : Rutgers University Press, 2005).
[303] Gerardo Marti. *Worship across the Racial Divide : Religious Music and the Multiracial Congregation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 173.

responses from many. Susan and Joseph hoped to facilitate this process as a contribution to the third generation in their congregation.

From 2002 to 2003, a study, called the National Study of Youth and Religion, included interviews of over 3,000 American teenagers about faith perspectives. Launching from the results of this study, Kenda Creasy Dean, in *Almost Christian; What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church,* states that "Many teenagers enact and espouse a religious outlook that is distinct form traditional teachings of most world religions—an outlook called Moralistic Therapeutic Deism."[304] This outlook entails being "nice" and tolerant, understanding God as something there to make people feel positive. This religious position is generally viewed as an improvement over what Christianity has symbolized for much of the world. In the lives of the teens espousing this approach to faith, God and mission have no real importance, but self-esteem and comfort become the most critical pursuits.[305] Similar to Pandya, Dean suggests that two main resources in some congregations that can address the 'Moralistic Therapeutic Deism' characterizing the faith position of much of the American youth.[306] These are highly devoted congregations, which promote the habitus and societal mission, and the presence of highly devoted teenagers, who embody the habitus of the church. Of five propositions Dean lists that we can learn from faith communities providing the environment that fosters these resources, Joseph realized and committed himself to the second: "religious

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[304] Kenda Creasy Dean. *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 21.
[305] *Ibid., 29*
[306] *Ibid.*

formation is not an accident."[307] Active engagement with leaders is necessary, leaders who will generate discussion and opportunities for faith and life integration in the context of church community involving mission and the participation in developing and promoting intentional habitus of reflective, relevant faith. Dean writes, "Faith is the legacy of communities that have invested time, energy, and love in them, and where the religious faith of adults inspire faith of their children."[308] This is the hope for contribution that inspires Joseph and Susan to stay in Chicago to take part in this ministry.

As with the others in this chapter, the hope to make a contribution has not been an easy journey for Susan and Joseph. Though staying in this unpaid ministry position rather than taking a job with one of their sons means a significant reduction in income and sacrifices in lifestyle, Joseph and Susan feel it is the call God has placed on their lives at this time, and therefore worth it, even if their sons do not agree. There are losses they must face as they hear their sons' disappointment. As time passes and they miss the programs and birthday parties in the lives of their grandchildren, the hope to make a contribution entails experiencing a range of emotion. The flow of their own natural family legacies carrying forth the past into the future are somewhat hindered by this decision to invest in young people who are unrelated by blood, but family in the faith. Yet as their gifts are recognized and received as valuable, their sense of calling is such that they carry forth this hope for making a contribution along with the losses inherent within it.

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[307] *Ibid.*
[308] *Ibid., 194.*

Chapter Conclusion

In the previous chapter, the hope to be accepted was multi-faceted in that the diaspora involved were seeking hope for acceptance from themselves and God, from the diaspora community and from others back in India. The hope to make a contribution is like-wise multi-faceted. First, this hope within the diaspora often entailed transcontinental exchanges of ideas, traditions and even people, such as Shanta's mother-in-law, the priest conducting her baby's *namkaran* services via Skype, and individuals involved in ministry in India coming to the US to raise funds. Secondly, in many cases, the reinterpretation or coopting of traditions or practices common to different group were offered. Examples of this include the walking group modeling their fitness program after groups commonly run in the suburbs by non-Indians and Anil's use of songs typical in Hindu temples for inculturated Christian worship. Thirdly, the hope to make a contribution often included not only offering a gift to others, but equipping others to offer that same gift as well. Joseph and Susan hoped to help the youth develop their faith, but also desired to equip them for leadership in the next generation. Anil hoped his model for ministry would be replicated by others in many other locations. Contributions also spanned a variety of domains from societal (such as the nursing home visits by the Indian church, the Center's vision to serve the South Asians in Chicago with free tutoring, and the walking club's desire to offer fitness and a sense of community to its members) and spiritual (such as the initial evangelism the Center offered, the inculturated worship Anil created and the ministry to teenagers at the Indian Church by Joseph and Susan). In all these levels of contribution, the hopes consisted of the journeying of people from their present state toward a new reality where their desires were manifest. In the journey, they experienced

the pushing and pulling influences of past and future, of losses and gains, of successes and failure and of fear and elation. They were risking much by hoping to contribute, often reflecting in the process about whether their contribution might be accepted. At times, they felt invigorated to keep hoping, believing that they had cause to believe that they could be agents of change, and at times passively hoping that things might just turn around on their own.

CHAPTER SIX: The Hope to be True to Oneself

Throughout the months of my research with the Indian diaspora in Chicago, there was some consistency, as mentioned in Chapters Four and Five, in the themes of hoping for acceptance from others, self and God, and hoping to make a significant and measurable contribution in a variety of ways. It was also very often the case that individuals and groups hoping for those things were aware that the people of the Indian diaspora around them, whether in clubs and associations, in workplaces, in community groups or in family, were also hoping for similar things. That awareness sometimes frustrated or confused the members whom I came to know. They wondered if they were merely products of a system, if they were falling easily into stereotypes, and if so, if that was negative or positive. They wondered if they truly wanted to be the same or different from the people around them inside the diaspora, and sometimes from those beyond. Amrith, in *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia*, suggests that in addition to widening social networks, migration seems to widen the "imaginative world" of those affected by it.[309] Thus, the members of the Indian diaspora in Chicago imagined relationships that could tolerate the most real and honest versions of themselves if they chose to venture from the pressures to be and to act in prescribed ways within the diaspora, if they dared to be more true to themselves. Inspired by this, in many cases, they then wondered what was really true for them especially in contexts where they had experiences of immediate acceptance or acute rejection.

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[309]Sunil Amrith. *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia*, 2.

In some aspects, the hope to be true to oneself echoes tropes of selfhood rehearsed by migrant groups in recent discourse on migrant populations regarding the negotiation of identity both as individuals and groups.[310] However, amongst immigrant groups, the Indian diaspora is unique in many ways. Perhaps one of the most poignant ways that the Indian diaspora in the US is unusual is that, despite the prejudices that sometimes come up against its members, they often outperform the majority population in many areas such as financial and academic success, professional achievement and, most recently, some areas of athletics, music and the arts. Their recent and very selective immigration history involving sudden masses of educated and professional individuals in large numbers has created a unique assimilation v. subculture pattern, even amongst Asians in the US that have longer or more constant histories of racial discrimination. Beyond the more typical pride in one's homeland and manifestations of culture such as cuisine, dance and literature often enjoyed by immigrants, the members of the Indian diaspora have the intense realization that their reputation as the "model minority" both within and without the diaspora is superior when it comes to achievement and success. Because of this unique position, ideas regarding assimilation are complex. "Why would we want to assimilate," they asked, "if we enjoy a superior level of success over the majority culture?" One participant, when discussing possible prejudices between Indians of differing social backgrounds or castes, stated, "Look, we are just happy to be with other

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[310] Lauren Ellis, and Eric C. Chen. "Negotiating Identity Development among Undocumented Immigrant College Students: A Grounded Theory Study." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 60, no.2 (2013): 251–64.
Kathleen Dehaan,. "Negotiating the Transnational Moment: Immigrant Letters as Performance of a Diasporic Identity." *National Identities*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2010): 107–131.
Laura Hirvi. "The Sikh Gurdwara in Finland: Negotiating, Maintaining and Transmitting Immigrants' Identities." *South Asian Diaspora*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2010): 219–232.

Indians." Assimilation into the majority culture for the Indians in the diaspora in Chicago is quite a different expression of being true to the self than it might be for other immigrant groups.

As demonstrated through the accounts in Chapter Four, a more common hope is to be accepted amongst the Indian diaspora itself. Yet, fitting into groups within the diaspora is not always easy or possible. While the numbers of Indian immigrants in the US were lower, the expectations for the diaspora were not quite as intense for the members initially. However, as the numbers of Indian immigrants have continually grown in the Chicago area, with stores, movies, restaurants and other businesses encouraging more growth, there seems to be an increasing confidence and cohesion in certain subtle social prescriptions. If members are comfortable living and moving within these prescriptions and are able to meet the expectations, members seemed to find an ease of social fit within the diaspora. However, for those who struggle to meet the standards expected, as Rupa did in Chapter Four, or for those who start to question these parameters, hoping to be more "true to oneself," the process becomes more complex.

Attempting to communicate the journey of others in assessing and clinging to what is personally and individually judged as "true to oneself" poses obvious challenges. Michael Jackson, in *As Wide as the World is Wise*, articulates the oscillation that is often experienced when identifying and naming differences between people on the one hand, or

grouping similarities on the other.[311] He writes, "These alternative perspectives are psychologically co-present for every anthropologist in the field."[312] Admittedly, this is the case in naming the similarities of hope in this qualitative research, especially with regard to the hope to be true to oneself. By definition, the very specific hope for something "true to self" for those I encountered seems to defy any kind of initial grouping of people. Yet, the reflective and sometimes active process of individuals and groups in examining motivations, impulses, traditions and relationships was a pattern that emerged. They underwent this process while confessing uncertainty about whether these were as defining or meaningful as they were once thought to be. The tendency to step towards relationships and expressions of self that seemed accepting of their "true" selves was frequent enough for me to believe there was a definite pattern emerging into a distinct analytical category. Their current state was often juxtaposed with an alternative that rang more true to the person experiencing it compared with that which had been suggested or experienced in the past.

In this chapter, I will give examples of a variety of ways in which this hope to be true to oneself was narrated or manifest in the actions of those I encountered. Through the story of "Nitara," I will describe one woman's experience of discontent with the feeling of being culturally essentialized by herself and her own community. This discontent fueled her desire for conversations with outsiders that welcomed her thoughts on topics of interest that were not typically welcomed within her usual diaspora social groups .The

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[311] Michael Jackson. *As Wide as the World Is Wise: Reinventing Philosophical Anthropology*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 56.
[312] *Ibid.*

hope to be true to oneself for Nitara was not in reaction to a sense of falseness in her present identity, but from frustration with a limited sense of self-expression welcomed in her usual social diaspora groups. Next, I will explain how, despite meeting the standard prescriptions for physical beauty and modesty in her role as a wife, successfully finding a husband and fulfilling that role was not the fulfillment of "Ruth's" hopes. She longed most for the true and lasting love that she believes is from God through Jesus; human love or performance of a prescribed role could not fill the ultimate hope she had for what she truly needed and wanted most. Through the stories of "Lukose" and his wife, "Lissy," the theme of hoping to be true to oneself will emerge as well. As they shared stories from their lives, from the Bible, from news and from sports, they communicated what hope meant to them. Their stories share a common thread of vulnerable and sometimes broken individuals experiencing community and support in their raw, authentic state. To be true to themselves, they wanted to relate from that place rather than performing as if their lives were perfect or pain-free. Finally, I will connect the comments and images shared by "Aahana," with the theme of hoping to be true to oneself, especially as it emerged in the context of friendship, faith and family. Aahana's journey uniquely demonstrates the deep reflection of herself as one in between many influences and her desire to ultimately be or do nothing that is not stemming from her true self.

Within these stories, there is the common subtle hope for something true for each person in the process of hoping. This hope, while more tentatively offered and more intimately held, was just as critical and illustrative of hope as the hope to be accepted and the hope to make a contribution. While the hope to be true to oneself is not unique to the Indian

diaspora, it was a prominent hope uniquely displayed in contrast to the desire to be numbered among this successful and respected "model minority" group.

In all of these illustrations, the hope to be true to oneself is cast as that same tension rope between realities. Within this hope, as with the hope to be accepted and the hope to make a contribution, the past of the individual or group meets with the present and future in a collision of influences that must be negotiated. Reflection, waiting and consideration are necessary both to recognize these influences and to name the hope that arises from them. Often in that reflection, interlocutors felt fear and doubt pulling them backwards, as well as excitement and desire pulling them forward. The hope to be true to oneself entails a sense of agency in disrobing what has been falsely put on and reaching for that which is more true or real for the individual. Yet, this agency is in a complex relationship with passivity. Within this hope, agency can entail a sense of passively accepting what is most true rather than creating it or attaining it. There is a definite mix of emotions in the process of hoping to be true to oneself. Losses and gains are possible and likely. The crossing of a chasm from what once was true or acceptable toward that which could be more real or currently true requires balance as well as psychological, social, intellectual and sometimes spiritual effort.

"Nitara"

Nitara is a successful women in IT who exemplifies all the positive stereotypes about the Indian diaspora in the US that she is quick to acknowledge are present in the social groups where she spends most of her time. She and the friends in these groups laugh

about these stereotypes, while at the same time, they contribute to them. Nitara admitted the stereotypes are flattering and make her feel proud. As stated earlier, many of these stereotypes suggest that the children of Indian immigrants in the US achieve high academic standing, and they master the highest levels in STEM and chess clubs, music programs and even some athletic events. Her kids have easily accomplished all of this and are also outgoing, confident and motivated to continue on this path without much prompting. Nitara lives with her son, her daughter and her husband in a large suburban home in one of the most popular locations for Indian diaspora around Chicago. She is active in many clubs and associations in the suburbs that are mostly populated by Indian diaspora. Further, she has many informal groups that gather to celebrate Indian holidays and religious celebrations together. While Nitara has enjoyed the availability of so many others in the diaspora to share life events and issues that are common among them, she admits that topics of conversation have been extremely limited within these groups. Topics have included IT issues, Hindi and Tamil movies and reviews of local businesses. Most often, however, Nitara shared that the women talk about the successes of their children and the next extracurricular programs or classes in which they should be enrolled to ensure continued achievement. Unlike Rupa's situation shared in Chapter Four, Nitara's story entailed an ease and pride in moving about these groups. Yet, she felt a sense of discontent or limitation on what she sensed she could express as she moved within these groups. She admitted this to me on a number of occasions as we sipped chai in her enormous, beautiful home in a northwest suburb of Chicago.

This experience of limited self-expression or ethnic essentialization is shared by migrants across faiths and ethnic groups. Mir traces similar experiences of essentialization in the lives of Muslims on college campuses. She states, "The individual's authenticity is threatened by the imperative to perform stereotypically minority identities."[313]

There are a number of possible reasons for the essentialization of identity based on cultural stereotypes that Nitara experienced leading to her feelings of discontentment in these groups. With the recent rise of populism, the potential costs of migrants seeking to be true to themselves are heightened. In describing Authoritarian-Populist parties, Norris and Inglehart suggest that "hostility toward multiculturalism, racial equality and minority rights, ethnic diversity and immigration" are defining trends.[314] Those determined to be not a real part of "the people" are subject to discrimination and legalized violence. Jan-Werner Müller states that in populism, "only some of the people should get to enjoy the full protection of the laws, those who do not belong to the people or, for that matter, who might be suspected of actively working against the people, should be treated harshly."[315] Fulfilling stereotypes or allowing oneself to be essentialized can have repercussions in many directions, in some cases preventing harm and in some cases invoking it. While the desire to be true to oneself may be common to many types of people, those considered migrants or minorities have to risk much more in honoring the hope for it.

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[313] Shabana Mir. *Muslim American Women on Campus : Undergraduate Social Life and Identity*, 177.
[314] Pippa Norris and Ronald F. Inglehart. *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 182.
[315] Jan-Werner Müller. *What Is Populism?* (London: Penguin Random House, 2017), 46.

Nitara was, in some ways, experiencing some benefit from the stereotypes about those in the Indian diaspora, including assumptions about her intelligence and work ethic by the employers who hired her and by teachers who assumed the best of her children. However, in critical ways, the stereotypes and essentialism seemed harmful; pressure, pride and shame are often byproducts of essentialization of self, based on stereotypes. In an effort to develop a feminist gender psychology that avoids the essentialism of gender, Mahalingam and Leu interviewed Indian immigrant women and Filipina mail-order brides, examining the effects of their intersection with White women in the US.[316] They explored the function of self-essentialism on identity in situations where these intersections occurred. Though the article ultimately seeks to examine the role of these essentialized selves in creating gender power relationships, the data is also relevant in understanding the effect on Nitara's sense of essentialized self, expressed within the diaspora community groups in which she was functioning regularly. The results of their study suggest that stereotypes can offer self-awareness and pride but can also lead to pressure, shame and depression. Resilience and optimism are needed to mediate the pride of the ideals that arise from the stereotypes as well as the shame of failing to meet them. Mahalingam and Leu argue that there are "psychological costs and benefits of such idealized self-representations."[317] In a study exploring the effect of such stereotypes regarding South Asians held by health care professions in the UK, Burr demonstrates this

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[316] Ramaswami Mahalingam and Janxin Leu. "Culture, Essentialism, Immigration and Representations of Gender." *Theory & Psychology* 15, no. 6 (2005): 839–860.
[317] *Ibid., 856.*

psychological cost directly.[318] Results from this study suggest that health care professionals were reported to view South Asian clients with fixed characteristics informed by culturally held stereotypes. Such views of South Asian clients led to mistaken diagnoses and treatment plans. Thus, the presence of the stereotypes with which Nitara was struggling has been measurably costly for South Asians in the diaspora.

These costs might be part of what causes the discontent that Nitara shared with me. However, I offer another possible suggestion for what might be a subtler trigger of this discontent: the hope to be true to oneself. Nitara suggested that the sameness and predictability of the conversation topics in the Indian diaspora social setting make her feel quite limited in a way that seemed to deny whole parts of her self. She stated that there is much more to all that is her identity that goes untapped because friends and acquaintances in those settings do not seem interested in broader topics. She longed for the chance to express herself in more of the fullness of her true self.

I shared on one occasion that I was concerned that my research brought chaos into what seemed to be a very well-organized, clean and peaceful home when I visited. I often brought one or two of my own children with me to play with her kids while we talked, which increased the noise and energy levels in their home significantly. I admitted that I also feared that my many questions might be tiresome, clarifying things that were quite obvious to most others in her typical social groups. I wondered whether all this was

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[318] Jennifer Burr. "Cultural Stereotypes of Women from South Asian Communities: Mental Health Care Professionals' Explanations for Patterns of Suicide and Depression." *Social Science & Medicine* 55, no. 5 (2002): 835–45.

annoying or burdensome. Did she invite me back because of a sense of obligation? How was she able to negotiate the intrusion? These questions brought about a kind of spark of mischief in her eye. Nitara quickly admitted that her husband, like many of her friends in the diaspora, has a strong intolerance for disorder and chaos. The serenity and cleanliness of their home was largely based on his intense insistence upon those things. When I came to visit, the noise grew louder, the remainder of chai ingredients sat on the stove, and she was asked to sit there talking about topics that normally went dormant in social settings. Those things were a welcomed change to her, she implied. Her husband even joined in the conversations at times instead of carrying about his usual business of cleaning up behind her or rushing to his yoga class. The fact that her husband was forced to tolerate the chaos my visits brought, if it was that, brought Nitara a kind of relief from the predictable cadence and control of her prescribed life, she said. She laughed as she shared that she could see behind her husband's gracious outward expression that he was feeling real frustration at times at the mess and interruption my visits created. This was a kind of "true life" that he needed to deal with, she thought. She hoped for him to learn to accept more grit, more of her true self.

Nitara also assured me that our topics of conversation were uniquely broad, in contrast to the very limited topics that were typically covered in her usual social gatherings. She hoped to operate out of the breadth of her identity, which included much more than the limited topics welcomed in the relationships she had formed in the diaspora community where the stereotypes were upheld. While we did talk about many of the topics that her other friends spoke about, in our conversations, she was also asked to reflect on and

comment about the groups themselves, her identity within them, and what was and was not welcomed in those relational spaces. This process seemed to trigger her own sense of realization that she longed to express more of her true self rather than limiting herself as a product of a subculture.

Nitara's desire to be true to herself may have partially been forged via the interview encounter. The hope about which I was there to inquire may have actually been created in part by the process of interacting and reflecting upon it. She was, in many ways, proud to be part of a very successful and beautiful diaspora group that she deemed superior in many ways compared to the majority culture. But she wanted to express more of her true self than she felt was welcomed in her diaspora groups. Often in answering my questions about faith and culture, she would answer until she encountered the limit of her knowledge, but she did not wish to stop there. At that point, she often pulled out her iPad and searched for more information or showed me photos of maps, book and movie titles, historical websites and videos that could help explain further. She shared her experiences and opinions about the new information openly and excitedly. In those times, she seemed to enjoy learning her own perspectives on new information within the answers she gave.

The hope to be true to oneself for Nitara involves the negotiation of constant tensions pulling her in many directions. Espiritu, in an article about the negotiation of Filipina immigrants with majority culture morality that was significantly liberal in comparison with diaspora expectations, suggests cultural "authenticity" involved staying separate or

other than the mainstream American society through policing sexual purity in females.[319] The contrast in morality was a marker for the Filipina immigrants of their "real" identity as Filipina. In many ways, understanding identity in contrast with majority culture worked for Nitara as well, creating a clear identity as a member of the Indian diaspora by the choices she made in bringing up her children, in the location where she resided and in selecting the social groups where she spent the most of her time in similar ways to most of the Indian diaspora around Chicago. Yet, there was another part of her that felt her ability to be true to herself was at odds with the norms in the diaspora setting. She longed to negotiate those opposing influences successfully. Nitara hoped to arrive at an integrated sense of identity that was more thorough and true to whom she really believed she was. In a study by Dulaney, Graupmann and Quinn, essentialist beliefs such as "it is important to have a clear idea of who my true self is" are linked with predictions of meaning in life.[320] They assert, "Authenticity has been described as the true self manifesting freely in daily behavior."[321] In a sense, then, Nitara hoped to replace her ethnically essentialized identity with a self-essentialism, or expressions of her true self in an effort to bring more meaning to life.[322]

Nitara had to negotiate other conflicting influences as part of the hope to be true to herself as well. Past traditions that represented identity as they connected her culturally with her country and family of origin were questioned, and she had to decide if they were

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[319] Yen Le Espiritu "'We Don't Sleep around like White Girls Do': Family, Culture, and Gender in Filipina American Lives." *Signs*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2001): 415–440.
[320] Ellen Dulaney, Verena Graupmann, and Kimberly Quinn. "Who Am I and How Often?: Variation in Self-essentialism Beliefs, Cognitive Style, and Well-being." *Personality and Individual Differences* 136 (2019): 148-59.
[321] *Ibid.*
[322] *Ibid.*

part of her true self, if she needed to shed them presently or if she needed to allow them to be shed in the future through her children. An example of this was manifest in the decision to allow her children to eat meat, though she had decided that her own authentic expression of faith and self entailed abstaining from consuming it. Nitara had to contend with fear and doubt as she questioned things that had been assumed before stepping into this hoping process, and they conflicted with the excitement of being more intentional about whom she really believed herself to be. Her journey of hoping entailed reverting back to old habits and assumptions at times and then moving forward into new areas of questioning and analyzing motivations for her actions and choices, wondering again if they were chosen and reflective of her "true" self. It is a process that seems to be continual in her life. As her self continues to develop, being true to her self may be evolutionary as well.

"Ruth"

Also born in India, Ruth is a first generation immigrant in her thirties from a south Indian state. She has been in the US for the past thirteen years. We met at a community event in a suburb of Chicago where she and her daughter sat behind me. Initiating a conversation at the close of the event, Ruth was warm, gracious and immediately accessible as an interlocutor and friend.

I had only seen Ruth in one context without her children when she agreed to meet me one weekend afternoon at a sushi restaurant so that I could interview her about hope. Her commitment to her children and her husband are unquestionable and are in keeping with

the expectations of the diaspora. Educating a few of them at home, she spends hours teaching, driving, cooking and cleaning for them daily. These are the tasks she believes are expected of her as a wife and mother; they are reinforced in her diasporic social groups. Conversations with her usually involve discussions about their needs as well as her participation in ministry with her husband at the Christian church she attends. Ruth exudes a kind of fulfillment or happiness as a wife and mother that is unmistakable. As her success in these roles is consistent with pressures and expectations that can be found within the Indian diaspora in Chicago, I wondered if Ruth's shared answers about hope in our interview would be centered around her husband and children entirely.

In several ways, Ruth's happiness in marriage is not surprising. She embodies the characteristics that some studies suggest are key to "marriageability" in South Asian Christian women. According to a jarring study by Amali Philips, beauty, especially manifest in fair skin and in combination with purity, is one of the key factors important for marriageability for Christians in South India. Philips proposes that skin color serves as a boundary-marker socially in South India, as it combines with other factors to define feminine identity, beauty and health to create marriageability in Syrian Christians in South India. Philips suggests,

> The ideal woman is not only the beautiful woman (fair, moral, healthy), but one whose sexual, erotic and disruptive sides are muted, concealed and contained within the secure confines of marriage and male attachments. …A woman's prospects in the marriage market are thus dependent on the extent to which she embodies the desired cultural qualities of ideal womanhood, in addition to her material worth and achievements.[323]

[323] Amali Philips. "Gendering Colour: Identity, Femininity and Marriage in Kerala." *Anthropologica*, vol. 46, no. 2 (2004): 269.

Additionally, Mehrotra provides a list of "cultural scripts" perceived by South Asian women in America regarding gender and marriageability. Through her study, she suggests that the thirty South Asian women interviewed consistently "learned the importance of physical beauty in making them marriageable, and, specifically, the beauty standard communicated directly and/or indirectly to women was generally that they needed to be thin and 'fair' or lighter – skinned."[324]

Fortunately, Philips' and Mehrotra's studies do not capture all the views of marriageability for South Indian Christians. Fair, modest, healthy and accomplished, Ruth certainly does embody the kind of "beauty" gestalt that encompasses the cultural qualities mentioned above. But the story of Ruth's engagement and marriage transcends Philips' and Mehrotra's research prescription for marriageability common among South Asians. Ruth and her husband, "Tim," are both "Syrian," or "Saint Thomas," Christians who met at the wedding of mutual friends in South India. Ruth explained that while Tim does admit that her beauty did not escape his notice when they met, the motivation for getting married was mostly due to a felt sense of God leading them into marriage. Ruth described this as being discerned in her spirit, which was a place of testing if something was true for her. Ruth explained that she was not even looking for a relationship at the point when she met Tim but that she felt that same sense of God leading her into marriage with him. She shared,

> [Tim] and I knew shortly after we met that this was a God thing. We knew immediately that this was right for us and we were going to be married. I was only nineteen. The physical attraction was definitely there when we first met, but my decision was not based

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[324] Gita Mehrotra. "South Asian Women and Marriage: Experiences of a Cultural Script." *Gender Issues* 33, no. 4 (2016): 350-71.

> on that as I was at a point in my life where I did not want to be in a relationship. I was sold out for God and only wanted to do His will. I had to pray a lot to make sure that [Tim] was God's best for me.

Thus, despite the reality that she was not expecting to marry soon, perhaps a main reason for Ruth's apparent marital happiness is due to this spiritual focus in choosing a spouse. S. L. Perry conducted a study to examine the extent to which marital happiness corresponds with the role that religion played in the selection of a marriage partner. Perry tested five hypotheses using data from the Portraits of American Life Study, formerly the Panel Study on American Religion and Ethnicity.[325] These results demonstrated that, "Religious influences are not necessarily helpful for matching persons with compatible mates."[326] However, the extent to which one's religion was important in the selection of a spouse for those who had religious spouses reported significantly greater expression of devotion and fewer experiences of criticism. Overall, those who had chosen their marital partner for religious reasons *and* selected a religious partner experienced greater marital satisfaction.[327] Tim did not consider Ruth's "marriageability" as defined by Philips' research; instead, they both selected a religious marriage partner specifically for religious reasons, and it resulted in a strong sense of marital happiness.

Further, while they do admit that marriage certainly can contain conflict at times, Ruth and Tim describe their marriage as strong and happy. They credit this sense of knowing God's will to their ability to get through the challenging times and enjoy marriage. Further, Tim

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[325] Samuel Perry. "A Match Made in Heaven? Religion-Based Marriage Decisions, Marital Quality, and the Moderating Effects of Spouse's Religious Commitment." *Social Indicators Research* 123, no. 1 (2015): *203-25*
[326] *Ibid.*
[327] *Ibid.*

and Ruth reported that they experience a deep level of intimacy as well as this ability to resolve conflict. Both of these factors, intimacy and the ability to resolve conflict, are examined by Shaifali Sandhya in a study demonstrating the effect of globalization on the assessment of marriage quality by those from the East. Sandhya conducted an extensive study on the influence of social context on levels of happiness in the marriages of urban Hindus.[328] Launching from the findings of previous research suggesting that personal factors in marriage such as intimacy and the resolution of conflict are less indicative of marital happiness in non-western marriage, Sandhya sought to measure marital happiness as nonwestern marriages are increasingly affected by trends in globalization such as living away from extended family. After distinguishing between Asian and American notions of "self" where the "East" describes the individual as a "collective-man" and the "West" construes self as the "I-self," Sandhya hypothesized that "marital happiness will be driven by factors promoting the self in the West and social relationships in the East."[329] However, the overall findings of Sandhya's study suggest that globalization has increasingly influenced non-westerners to view personal desires such as intimacy with a spouse as a predictor of happiness, challenging cultural perspectives from the past. I found it interesting in Sandhya's study that *intimacy* with a spouse was associated with the western "I-self," as opposed to part of the "collective-man" of the East, since intimacy connotes relationship. Sandhya's association raises questions of the sociological meaning of intimacy. Fortsie, in an effort to provide a new sociological framework for the concept of intimacy, balances the influences on intimacy between social and internal pressures. She

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[328] Shaifali Sandhya. "The Social Context of Marital Happiness in Urban Indian Couples: Interplay of Intimacy and Conflict." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2009): 74–96.
[329] *Ibid.*

suggests that affect, knowledge, mutual action and social norms are key to its development.[330] Through this study, Fortsie seems to combine the eastern and western approaches to selfhood. I wondered if, in the diasporic context of the Indians in Chicago where the social context of extended family is often less available, the collective-man view of self (including the effect of Fortsie's social norms) might be represented by internalized memories from family or culture of origin. In any case, if intimacy and the ability to handle challenges and conflict are indicative of satisfaction and happiness in marriage, and Ruth and Tim acknowledged that they believed that they were very successfully achieving these factors, we can conclude that Ruth and Tim indeed have a satisfying and happy marriage.

It was no surprise, then, that when I interviewed Ruth about hope, the *second* hope she discussed was the hope for a continually strong marriage. She talked about her parents' marriage and their commitment to making it work, using it as the model of her hope for a good marriage:

> My dad is 70, my mom's 65 and they are still very loving and caring with each other..and that for me, it's like a hope of a good marriage. I think, when the kids go, and it's just the two of you..I look at them, and they are empty nesters, and they still care about each other and they travel, and they take care of each other when they are sick, and that's hope. They always say, keep your husband your priority. Even when you have children, let him know he is number one. And it's very difficult when we are consumed with our children. At times Tim needs something and I say, 'Hang on! The kids need something!' But when I was growing up, my mom always said that she loved my dad more than us. We never would ever understand that. I remember thinking 'How can you say that? We are your children!' But she would say that we were all going to leave her and I would say, 'No, I'm never going to leave!' But she would say we would leave her, and my dad needed to know that she loved him and had taken care of him. That way he will return that love to her when everyone else left the house. I see that now, they are still together. This is what I need to remind myself… I was just talking to a friend about the level of commitment between spouses can be stronger in arranged marriages--in most cases. There are exceptions to this of course. But just looking at my parents' marriage, and them sticking it through no matter what—it's an eye opener."

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[330] Clare Forstie. "A New Framing for an Old Sociology of Intimacy." *Sociology Compass* 11, no. 4 (2017): N/a.

However, though Ruth is very committed to her family and to building a strong marriage, and though she successfully performs in those roles according to the social expectations of her diasporic groups, "Jesus" is what she described as her *first* hope, and as the most true and real thing that she desires.

> At the end of the day, I try to please God and not man. My marriage, of course, has God in the center. I've realized over time that everything I desire that is most true and real, I already have access to. As my Father, God had given it all to me. It's my job to recognize it, receive it and tap into it every time I need it. You know..Rom 5:1-5[331]? Yes, we live in this world and things are always changing. Our only constant is God! So while our environment is never going to be conducive, the joy, peace and love that He gives us is constant. So we can chose to focus on what He gave us that no matter what happens in the natural. For me personally, hope is just Jesus. I don't know. It's because, the joy the peace and the hope…and the permanency…that we can find here because no matter what you do and how happy you feel, its momentary. It's gone and it ends. We have all been there before we were strong in our faith, where you experience other things that make you happy but then its gone and you want something deeper. You want a hope that is going to sustain you. And then I found Jesus, who just keeps me going every day. You want to be a better person because of that hope, you want to make your marriage work. You want to be a better mother. When I think hope, I think Jesus.

Like Nitara, Ruth was experiencing success in the most crucial endeavors that were part of her daily life. Despite not finding a marital partner by aiming to promote all the aspects of her character consistent with marriageability, she married successfully and found a strong level of intimacy and happiness in her marriage. Still, the hope to be true to her self in loving Jesus, whom she believes is most lasting and true, surpassed the fulfillment from this marital success. The hope to be true to oneself, represented by what she calls "something deeper," in the life of Ruth is quite distinct from the hope to be

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[331] Romans 5:1-5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (New International Version).

accepted or from the hope to make a contribution. Though she did hope to be accepted by God through faith and to contribute to her marriage, her children and society, her hope ultimately was for Jesus, whom she called "most true and most real," as well as the joy and peace and sense of permanency that accompanied her faith. The joy and peace that Ruth described were derived from a definite sense of being in intimate relationship with God.

There was a sense in which she communicated that her love and commitment to God came first, and marriage and family were next because Jesus is most true. Martyn Percy, through his accounts of the "Toronto Blessing" which began in 1994, describes worship as having a distinctive grammar that "put more accent on concepts such as the 'softness' and 'gentle touch' of God and the desirability of acquiescence in the believer."[332] He quotes lyrics to a popular worship song used often during the services such as "I will be yours, you will be mine. Together in eternity our hearts of love will be entwined," demonstrating the expressions by devotees that connoted a deep desire for emotional and relational intimacy with God.[333] This intimacy might be said to characterize Ruth's faith as well.

In suggesting that she experienced intimacy with God, Ruth did not describe being married to God, participating in any kind of sensual ritual or experiencing erotic connection with God as she described his nearness. However, comparisons between

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[332] Ian Markham and Joshua Daniel. *Reasonable Radical?: Reading the Writings of Martyn Percy*. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 278.
[333] *Ibid.*

devotional attachment and romance or even eroticism between devotees and God are not uncommon across religions. The lyrics sung during the Toronto blessing would be fitting for some devotees of Krishna as well. In an article describing Kartik puja near the Ganges, Pintchman suggests the theology of Vaishnavites includes the propagation of the idea of spiritual intimacy with Krishna and explains that she observed this intimacy in the Kartik puja, stating "many participants not only acknowledged, but delighted in describing accounts of Radha and the gopi's sexual intimacy with Krishna."[334] Pintchman suggests that the erotic dance of the participants parallels those of Krishna himself in the mythological account of his circle dance, surrounded by cowherdesses where he enjoyed intimacy with each one.[335] Vanamali retells the life of Krishna taken from scriptures and oral traditions and dedicates an entire chapter to Krishna as "Divine Lover."[336] Through the narratives, she describes the eager response of gopis,[337] to the flute music Krishna uses to charm them.[338] "The music drenched the air of Vrindavana and flowed into the hearts of the gopis, making them forget everything else," she writes.[339] They run, half clothed, leaving all their chores half done.

Vanamili continues,

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[334] Tracy Pintchman. "Raising Krishna with Love: Maternal Devotion as a Form of Yoga in a Women's Ritual Tradition." In *Theory and Practice of Yoga : Essays in Honour of Gerald James Larson*. Larson, Gerald James and Knut Jacobsen. A Studies in the History of Religions ; 110. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 351-362.

[335] Tracy Pintchman. "Courting Krishna on the Banks of the Ganges: Gender and Power in a Hindu Womens Ritual Tradition." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 1 (January 2004): 25–36.

[336] Mataji Devi Vanamali. *The Complete Life of Krishna: Based on the Earliest Oral Traditions and the Sacred Scriptures ; (Taken from the Srimad Bhagavatam, Srimad Mahabharata, and the Wealth of Oral Traditions)*. (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2012), 83-94.

[337] Gopis are most commonly known from the Puranas as the cowherding women demonstrating devotion to Krishna.

[338] Mataji Devi Vanamali. *The Complete Life of Krishna: Based on the Earliest Oral Traditions and the Sacred Scriptures. 84.*

[339] *Ibid.*

> Hair flying, bells tinkling, breasts thudding, hearts pounding, they ran through the moon-drenched streets and down the forest paths, lured by the strains of that divine melody. Some, who were locked up in their rooms by their husbands, closed their eyes and became absorbed in him and gave up their earthly bodies then and there. The rest reached him panting and excited, with parted lips and heaving breasts. Their whole attitude was wanton. They saw him only as their lover.[340]

While a "feeling of personal contact with the deity," or *darshan,* is the aim of Hindu worship generally, rapturous love is especially the focus of Krishna devotion.[341] The expression of deep love and devotion is the means by which devotees attain the grace of God and release from rebirth.[342]

Power differentials come into new alignment with love and erotic references in faith practice such as these. Pintchman further describes the shift that takes place halfway through the Kartik celebration where a priest enters the worship circle, and bawdy jokes and dancing take place in anticipation of his Krishna's impending marriage.[343] The Kartik puja combines references to this with a broader narrative of Krishna, next introduced to the ceremony as an infant. This allows the devotees to show intimate maternal devotion through swinging a clay icon of him in a cloth, offering him milk and singing songs to sooth him, taking the intimacy in a new direction.[344] Values important to those with less power can be prominently voiced through such rituals. Pintchman suggests that though Sanskrit texts focus on the awakening of Vishnu for the marriage, this is not a critical

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[340] *Ibid.,* 84.
[341] Stephen Huyler. *Meeting God : Elements of Hindu Devotion*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 36.
[342] *Ibid*.,150.
[343] *Ibid.*
[344] *Ibid*.

aspect of the ritual ceremony.[345] Instead, women highlight the marriage of Krishna because it has a more significant relationship to their daily lives, and then focus on the maternal connection with Krishna in child form to validate their maternal roles. Pintchman writes,

> Since women control and shape Kartik puja traditions, these traditions tend to reflect women's values and concerns. For Hindu women, marriage tends to be a highly significant event. Marriage effects a total transformation on the identity of a traditional Hindu bride, who leaves her own home for a new one, exchanging her natal family for her husband's family.[346]

Thus, the women expressed power by selecting expressions of intimacy in ritual observation reflective of their daily lives and roles. The chance to exercise this power may have intensified their devotion in situations where power differentials are not usually in their favor.

I did not get the impression from Ruth that power in marriage played any part in the joy and peace she experienced with Jesus. However, I did wonder if intense experiences of attachment to God might alter experiences of attachment in marriage. As I considered Ruth's marriage and her hope in Jesus, I wondered how her second hope (marriage) might be affected by her first hope (Jesus) with regard to the freedom or detachment she seemed to convey. Since her theological beliefs held that both she and her husband would be in heaven together, but would no longer be in a married state, I wondered if her theological beliefs, which afforded her a certain level of emotional "detachment"[347] from

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[345] *Ibid.*
[346] *Ibid.,26-27.*
[347] Psychologically, Ruth was able to form strong attachments. Since Ruth aligns with Christian tradition, in using the term "detachment" in this section, I am referring to a spiritual posture and prioritization of relationships akin to that advocated by St. John of the Cross (e.g. "It is seriously wrong to have more regard

her husband and children, might contribute to her happiness as well. I wondered, too, how this detachment might be similar or different from those who held theological ideas more consistent with the perspective held by some Hindus that spouses are reunified in marriage after death through reincarnation for the duration of at least seven lives.[348] More specifically, I wondered if the belief that one will not be committed in marriage after death would prompt a person to enjoy their marriage more given a limited amount of time, allowing them to hold expectations loosely, and possibly increasing marital happiness. Conversely, I wondered if detachment resulting from the belief that marriage is only for this one life might increase pressure in marriage; if one believes time together in marriage was thus limited, would a couple experience more pressure to arrive at satisfactory levels within the marital relationship, and hence, sabotage or inhibit attempts at marital happiness?

As I was considering this in the Christian marriage of Ruth, I had a conversation via text with Nitara about how beliefs about reunification with one's spouse through reincarnation could effect one's attachment and happiness in a Hindu marriage. According to a popular website promoting colloquial perspectives frequently visited by those in the Hindu diaspora community, marriages "are made in heaven, and once you are

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for God's blessings that for God himself: prayer and detachment.") Cross, John Of the. *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*. (Trivandrum, Kerala, India: Carmel International Pub. House, 2001).

[348] The concept of detachment as understood and utilized by John of the Cross overlaps with the way that detachment might be understood according to some Hindu texts. Though they differ in that the writings of St. John of the Cross advocate attachment to God and some in the Hindu tradition would advocate detaching from everything as a means to seek emancipation from the illusory world, the similarity is that both allow for relationships in this life to be sought, but not as ultimate fulfillment. In my descriptions of Ruth and Nitara, "detachment" and "attachment" is commonly used to communicate these overlapping meanings.

married, the bond is supposed to last for seven lifetimes."[349] After I shared my hypothesis that attachment in marriage would increase if you believed that death would keep partners in marriage for seven lives, Nitara responded,

> This is the traditional view of marriage in India. There are folks that still believe it. But if you ask someone with more modern/scientific/analytical view of life, you won't get the same response. In India and the Hindu religion, we say a marriage is a bond of seven lives. At times, we do crack a joke saying hopefully this is the seventh life! So it's part of the culture, but how much people believe it??…I have not often observed it.

If Nitara is correct that this view is no longer widely held, then it most likely is not a significant factor in creating a greater marital attachment. Nitara further explained her view that even if marriage does reoccur between spouses from one life to the next after reincarnation, the time between such marriages is so long that it would render the connection rather meaningless.

> Talking about people being connected to each other in different lives in some way or the other…you are talking about reincarnation here…that is very commonly believed in Hinduism. There is a saying to make the most of human life because you don't get to be born as human every time. It takes 84 lakh[350] lives before you can be born human again.

If that is the case, attachment or detachment in marriage might be unaffected by such beliefs about the afterlife. On the other hand, if one adopts the philosophical position of some Hindus that all of matter and life is *maya*, or illusion,[351] and that *moksha*, or salvation, entails the eventual release from all attachment, I wondered if holding this position could influence a detachment in marriage comparable to that which Ruth seemed to have through her Christian belief.

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[349]Common sources of the proliferation of such perspectives in some Hindu communities include websites such as "Traditional Hindu Wedding - Rituals, Ceremony, Significance, Facts, Dress." Traditional Hindu Wedding - Rituals, Ceremony, Significance, Facts, Dress. Accessed July 08, 2019. https://www.culturalindia.net/weddings/regional-weddings/hindu-wedding.html.

[350] 1 lakh = 100,000

[351] This concept is common to many Hindu traditions and texts. (eg**. Svetasvatara Upanishad Part 1 refers to all of creation as "the great illusion.")**

Describing the terrain of the hoping process as I have with Nitara and others in the two previous chapters is a bit more complex in Ruth's case because of the way she uses the word hope as a noun rather than a verb. She calls Jesus her hope and suggests that this hope is already fulfilled. Therefore, one could argue that she is no longer in the process of hoping for something not yet attained. However, she mentioned the journey she had already taken from the point of finding happiness in temporal things to finding something more true. ("We have all been there before we were strong in our faith, where you experience other things that make you happy but then its gone and you want something deeper.") In that journey, Ruth did experience the hoping process, possibly including the conflicting emotions, backward and forwards movement and other dynamics I have described as part of the hoping process. She had crossed a chasm from unfulfillment to peace, joy and a sense of permanency.

Further, there is a future attainment inherent within her faith in Jesus, so one could argue that there is still a sense of journeying as Jesus "sustains" her in the day-to-day trials of life. There seems to be a kind of contradiction she must negotiate, this time not between conflicting aspects of the same hope, but between the object of hope (Jesus, and the hope he brings Ruth) and the daily experiences that threaten that peace. In this sense, hope takes on a new kind of function more consistent with the view of hope of Moltmann in *Theology of Hope*.[352] He writes, "Present and future, experience and hope, stand in contradiction to each other in Christian eschatology, with the result that man is not

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[352] Jürgen Moltmann and James Leitch. *Theology of Hope. On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology.* Translated by James W. Leitch. (London: SCM Press, 1967). 18.

brought into harmony and agreement with the given situation, but is drawn into the conflict between hope and experience."[353] Thus, despite the unique way in which Ruth suggests that her hope for what is most true is fulfilled already in Jesus, she remains in the process of hoping and negotiating intersecting influences. Thus, Ruth's hopes for marriage, which are consistent with the social prescriptions within the diaspora, are bolstered by her stronger hope to be true to her desire for Jesus.

"Lukose and Lissy"

I met Lukose as a divorced and single man in a local Christian church in Chicago. He was the only Indian at the church at the time, with a causal manner and no trace of Indian accent in his speech despite only having been in the US for twelve years at the time we met. Though he had a job selling automobiles, he also liked to invent appliances and gadgets that he hoped to sell one day. Lukose was not particularly eager to speak about issues or topics related to his Indian identity, and for the first months after I met him, I did not hear him speak of connections in India or connections to the Indian diaspora.

About four months after I met him, I learned from mutual friends that Lukose had just returned from a brief trip to India where he met and married a woman that his family had chosen for him. Lukose's previous marriage had taken place in America, but he never shared anything further about it. I was excited to find out further that Lukose planned on attending a gathering that I would be hosting at my home two days after he was scheduled to return to the US with his new wife. It was there that I first met Lissy.

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[353] *Ibid., 4.*

Since she was also from Kerala and also divorced, Lissy's parents were excited to find a solid match for their daughter in Lukose. She was shy and insecure about her English when she arrived, but she quickly acclimated and began working as an art teacher in a local elementary school.

I spent time with Lukose and Lissy in social environments where mutual friends were gathered. Lukose and Lissy also joined my family, along with the visiting parents of Lukose, on a hiking trip. We had conversations about Lissy's acclimation, Lukose's inventions and their many pets. While I enjoyed these conversations, I felt that they were somewhat restricted due to the social environments in which we were gathering. There was only a certain level of disclosure that was possible there. I wanted to interview them about hope, so we arranged a time for me to interview them specifically about it in their home.

In preparation for the interview, Lukose printed a few written stories as "images" of hope. Upon my arrival, he acknowledged that he had really given the idea of hope some deep consideration and was prepared with worthwhile material. "Garbage in, Garbage out," he said, as he explained that if he and others did not offer truly meaningful data, my research would be shallow. His intentionality seemed to manifest and communicate the latent hope to be true to oneself and to help my research to be meaningful by telling me the real story about hope within the diaspora.

Lukose's awareness of the significance of his role in co-creating the research even before the interview took place was fascinating. Often in the process of using visual methods, researchers will collaborate with participants in selecting and editing the resulting data to ensure participants' perspectives are captured. Gubrium and Harper suggest that one of the benefits of using visual methods is that a collaborated effort is particularly possible through their use; they write that such methods "blur the line between researcher and research subject by involving participants during and after the fieldwork stage as co-creators of research products."[354] Lukose, however, took the opportunity to select and edit his material even before the interview, ensuring that his perspectives of the "true story" were honored.

He read the first story aloud. It was a reflection taken from a blog regarding a famous and successful actress who struggled with deep loneliness in secret. After she had taken her own life, her private confessions of pain were discovered. This story illustrated for Lukose that we cannot assume that others are happy even when they appear to be. We have an obligation, he explained, to constantly reach out beyond ourselves and make sure that people are *really* okay, really connecting with others authentically. Hope, according to Lukose, could not be true hope unless it reached out beyond itself in a real and meaningful manner. He explained that meeting even the lesser critical needs of people where they are just to assure them that you care was almost more important than contributing in large ways. To be true to himself, he wanted to reach out to others in the

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[354] Aline Gubrium and Krista Harper. *Participatory Visual and Digital Methods*. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 43.

truth of their reality rather than playing a role or performing a charitable role from an emotional distance.

By focusing on mutual responsibility of being in authentic community, Lukose seemed to take the ideal being true to oneself in quite a different direction from Charles Taylor's ideas of authenticity. As the offspring of individualism that culminated in western societies due to the combination of humanistic and romanticist ideals, the dangers and limits of authenticity as a goal or value in a society are highlighted in Taylor's work.[355] Suggesting that authenticity is presently an ideal defined in western society by each individual, Taylor suggests that the idea "there is a certain way of being human that is my way" is a new idea held in modern consciousness that has crucial moral importance.[356] However, Lukose takes the idea of authenticity is a different direction. Being true to himself entails the recognition that there are often defenses and distractions in life that cause us to miss cues and comments by friends or acquaintances that give us insights into struggles and weaknesses, Lukose suggests that we need to look harder and to pay more attention so that we can see the other truly because that is where real meeting of true selves can happen. There we can be seen and can help the other to feel safe enough to be seen. Interestingly, Lukose seemed to agree with Taylor's view that the modern self is internally derived from a moral stance, or one's relationship to the "good" in everyday events,[357] rather than from participation in extraordinary events. Lukose also suggests that the hope to be true to oneself entails the process of moving out beyond itself toward

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[355] Charles Taylor. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 28-29.
[356] *Ibid. P. 29.*
[357] Charles Taylor. *Sources of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 14.

another. Despite being divorced, which was not socially acceptable amongst most of the groups of Indian diaspora that Lukose had encountered in the Chicago area, his hope to be true to himself could not be denied. He chose to be honest about pain and loss and welcomed others to do the same around him even when social conventions prohibited it within the diaspora.

Lissy's images were stored on her phone. She had likewise given considerable thought to the meaning of hope in her life and had combed the Internet for images that precisely communicated her perspective. Her stories and images flowed in a stream of consciousness beginning with a photo of a leaf growing out of cracked, dry ground. Lissy explained that she had recently undergone an ultrasound confirming the presence of a healthy, growing baby within her. The dream of being a mother had been almost destroyed through the failure of her first marriage. Hoping for another marriage, much less the chance to bear a child had seemed almost weighty or overwhelming. She explained that a seed cannot grow on its own but needs help, especially if it is growing in an impossible place like cracks in asphalt. "Hope is a very important word," she said three or four times as she shared. Lissy said that she found hope in prayer during times when she had been suicidal in the past and through her divorce. "I felt very low," she said, "except that things in the Word encouraged me. There are times when the Lord comes through scripture and shows me he is faithful and powerful to answer my needs." The effects of Lissy's use of the Bible are consistent with the findings of Bielo in his work on "biblicalism" across cultures. In considering the cultural context on the perspectives and use of the Christian Bible in a variety of settings, Bielo seeks to trace

the meaning behind the variety of approaches to the Bible by the interlocutors in the study. He states, "Millions of people throughout the world read interpret, apply, use and otherwise engage with the Bible everyday. Men and women without formal training in biblical languages, hermeneutics, theology and history approach the Bible with confidence, awe, bemusement and suspicion. They find meaning, comfort, inspiration, council, strength and conviction."[358] Lissy's cultural and theological position situated her in a way that enabled the texts from the Bible to bring her the comfort and strength in her true self that Bielo suggests often results in those who read it.

Lissy then transitioned to a photo of a leaf brought to Noah by a bird that flew out from the ark in the Old Testament Bible account, demonstrating that there was land now exposed so that Noah and his family would be able to land and exit the ark soon.[359] The leaf in the dove's mouth was proof of hope that salvation had come, that life could continue, and that the trial could end. A study conducted between 1992 and 2001 acknowledges that suicide rates in Vellore, India were seven-fold higher than anywhere else in the world.[360] The report in the *Lancet Journal* recognizes that there is no reason to believe that the suicide rates are higher in that city than in other similar Indian towns, but that the measurability in that town is most accurate due to the presence of the Christian Medical College, which has been able to track statistics most precisely. Lissy came from a city much like Vellore in South India. The depression and suicidal ideation that she

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[358] James Bielo. *The Social Life of Scriptures: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Biblicism*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 1.
[359] Genesis 6:9-9:17 NIV Translation.
[360] Rita Aaron Abraham Joseph, Sulochana Abraham, Jayaprakash Muliyil, Kuryan George, Jasmine Prasad, Shantidani Minz, Vinod Joseph Abraham, and Anuradha Bose. "Suicides in Young People in Rural Southern India." *The Lancet* 363, no. 9415 (2004): 1117-118.

shared had been very real. It may have been in part due to Lissy's spirituality that she was able to find a life-affirming path. Correlations between wellbeing and religious or spiritual involvement have been widely studied. Gains in health, achievement, coping and social capital are a few particular areas where practices related to faith expression such as prayer and meditation are connected. For example, Koenig, King and Benner Carson itemize both the positive and negative effects of religion on many facets of human wellbeing.[361] Baker and Miles-Watson provide an overview of the historical development of theories of social capital from Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam, and then discuss recent literature with reference to spiritual capital, culminating with implications of these on public core value.[362] In a study particularly relevant to Lissy, Portnoff, et al. measured the positive effects of spirituality on levels of depression in the US, China and India. Their results demonstrated that,

> A high level of spirituality was found to reduce by roughly half the relative risk of depression across participants from the United States, China, and India. The reduced relative risk associated with high spirituality was true when depression was assessed at both a moderate level and a severe level of symptomology, and so too reduced risk was found for a moderate level of suicidal ideation, across participants from all three countries.[363]

Even with the strength of her spirituality, navigating the past had not been easy. In India, the disappointment she and her family felt when her marriage ended was deeply intense. Lissy spoke softly as she shared her images. They were not confidently offered as I found Lukose's stories to be. She was tender and thoughtful as she spoke, as if she could still

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[361] Harold Koenig, Dana King, and Verna Benner Carson. *Handbook of Religion and Health*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
[362] Chris Baker and Jonathan Miles-Watson. "Exploring Secular Spiritual Capital: An Engagement in Religious and Secular Dialogue for a Common Future?" *International Journal of Public Theology* 2, no. 4 (2008): 442-64.
[363] Larissa Portnoff et al. "Spirituality Cuts in Half the Relative Risk for Depression: Findings From the United States, China, and India." *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2017): 22–31.

recall and even embody in her posture the moments in the past when she was uncertain if a leaf could grow in the cracks of asphalt. The delicacy of the new leaf and its precarious nature seemed to tell her own internal story, and I felt ushered into a very authentic space with Lissy where I had never been invited before. Again, more than the images, I felt that the process of reflecting on hope enabled me to access and identify a hope that went unspoken in Lissy in a blatant way but which was communicated through her wide, trusting eyes and softness. She hoped to be true to herself rather than masking that pain of the past.

Even in his confidence, Lukose seemed unusually vulnerable that afternoon. Despite the fact that the divorce and separation rate in India has more than doubled since 1995,[364] the pain and hardship it cost Lukose was intense, especially due to the disappointment expressed from his family and the resulting sense of isolation. His financial difficulties and loneliness were overwhelming during the time of his divorce. He shared an incident where a man approached him in church and suddenly handed him a check for his mortgage. Lukose was not expecting any help. In fact, he wondered if anyone knew that he was struggling—or even cared. At that point, he had not felt free to be his true self and to express the pain he was experiencing openly. However, the sense of being seen and accepted as one who "needs a hand up" was deeply meaningful to him. It communicated that he could be honest about his authentic state. Lukose physically acted out the gesture of needing a hand up at this point in the interview. He suggested that the saying "hand up" implies one is on the ground, in the dirt, unable to stand without the help of someone

[364] Premchand Dommaraju. "Divorce and Separation in India: Divorce and Separation in India." *Population and Development Review*, vol. 42, no. 2 (2016): 195–223.

else that is concerned enough to reach out. Hope, he said, is what happens between two people in that space. To live in hope, then, necessitates that one be real about their emotional state. He longed to be true to himself in that way.

Lukose's definition of hope seems to complement Putnam's suggestion that societies with high levels of social capital enjoy many benefits, such as lower crime and mortality rates, better health and academic achievement, more community and political participation and generally the experience of a higher level of trust.[365]

While Putnam does not argue that these advantages portray hope specifically, the hope studies reviewed in Chapter Two demonstrate that higher levels of hope seem to generate a similar list. Lukose's idea of a "hand up" as a manifestation of hope seems to connect hoping with the benefits shared by increases in social capital. At the end of the interview, Lukose finished his descriptions of hope with a similar story of two opponents on a sports field. Concurrently, the opposing players attempt to score a goal. However, both players are aware and concerned enough that when a member of the opposing team falls down, he puts aside the goal from his mind, and literally reaches his hand out to help the other player. Hope happens during moments of dependence when one is known to be weak but is accepted and helped in that in the truth of one's authentic state.

I found Lukose and Lissy to have similar ideas about hope in many ways. I initially wondered if Lukose really had hoped to make a contribution as he continually referred to

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[365]Robert Putnam. *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*. (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

real hope necessitating action towards another. However, his hope entailed a two-way channel where there was a deep level of self-disclosure, quite different from the examples of the hope for contribution in the previous chapter. I also wondered if the hope for acceptance was what they were both communicating. Yet, this did not fit them either because they were not interested in acceptance by attempting to embody the attributes an outside source suggested. They did not merely long to be accepted but to be able to be their most true and vulnerable self, and to be seen and accepted in that reality, quite differently from the examples in Chapter Four. Vulnerability was a key aspect of hope for both of them, and I wondered if that might be their actual hope, instead of hoping to be true to themselves, initially. Identifying where vulnerability stops and daring to be true to oneself begins is difficult to ascertain. However, I do not believe that either Lukose or Lissy ever communicated that they desired to be vulnerable. Rather, I believe they felt that life had brought them to a place of self-reflection that allowed them to identify their own vulnerability, and they wanted to be known as their true selves in a space of vulnerability rather than covering it or avoiding it. For this reason, I believe what they hoped for most was a deep sense of authentic connection where they were known in their brokenness as well as their strength, rather than playing a role that society asked them to play. Their manner of sharing communicated this as much as their content.

For both Lukose and Lissy, the process of hoping to be true to themselves entailed, once again, the negotiation of conflicting influences. For both, the past pain of divorce met up with their present happily married state and the reality of a first child on the way. The message of their Christian faith, suggesting all of us are sinful but forgiven and free

because of Jesus's death and resurrection, clashed with shame messages from family about failure and disappointment from their divorces. Their fears and doubts about hoping for a healthy child after experiencing losses in the past conflicted with their sense that God would sustain and uphold them. These images came about as the result of their reflection upon hoping, and the process of reflecting seemed to enhance their hope as they shared. In the stories of both, Lukose and Lissy acknowledged that agency in hope is limited because it is somewhat dependent upon the responses of others, yet Lukose's stories suggest that one can control how much one engages in the authentic disclosure of one's true self and one's true needs in order to facilitate the response of another.

A Hindu Temple Tour Guide

As mentioned in Chapter Three, there are a few very large complexes containing multiple temples in the metropolitan Chicago area that are dedicated to various deities typically associated with Hindu worship. I was able to spend some afternoons in one of these complexes in particular with some regularity, varying my time in different smaller temples within the complex. As one of the oldest temples in the Chicago area, it was built by immigrants from India in the 1980's. Adjacent to the large Rama temple, there is a small side room dedicated to the worship of Krishna.

Both Rama and Krishna are avatars of Vishnu. Rama is respected and worshipped as a strong and capable warrior.[366] As mentioned earlier, worshippers often relate with

[366] Stephen Huyler,. *Meeting God : Elements of Hindu Devotion*, 33.

Krishna through an emotional connection, since salvation comes from Krishna through love, as part of the Bhakti movement, of "way of devotion." Known by some historically as a reform movement attempting to bring harmony to society,[367] the Bhakti movement has roots that can be traced back to references in scriptural texts such as the Bhagavad-Gita, where Krishna counsels Arjuna to do his duty and to find salvation through devotion to Krishna.[368] Though in the Gita, God is generally presented more as a teacher than a lover, the knowledge that is imparted to him suggests duty and devotion are one act.[369]

As we have seen through the description of the Kartik puja, Krishna is worshipped at various developmental stages and in different mythological contexts. While he is often depicted as a man engaged in various love relationships with wives and consorts, depictions of him as a baby or as a mischievous child are also very common. After describing the participants' enjoyment of the accounts of Radha and the gopi's erotic relationship with Krishna, Pintchman suggests that the participants believed their human devotion was actually more importantly conveyed through their role as caregivers to the child Krishna and that they stressed the emotional rather than the sexual nature of the attachment between the gopis and Krishna.[370] As Krishna enters the Kartik as a child instead of a man, he lures the milkmaids away from their husbands so that they can have their turn holding and caressing the child. Vanamali writes, "He was a source of unlimited bliss to the gopis, who used to finish their housework as fast as possible and

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[367] Rekha Pande. "The Bhakti Movement—An Interpretation." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 48 (1987): 214-21.
[368] Mataji Devi Vanamali. *The Complete Life of Krishna: Based on the Earliest Oral Traditions and the Sacred Scriptures*, 294.
[369] Edwin Bryant. *Krishna: a Sourcebook*. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2007), 115.
[370] Tracy Pintchman. "Raising Krishna with Love: Maternal Devotion as a Form of Yoga in a Women's Ritual Tradition."

crowd around Yashoda's[371] house to pet him and fondle him and exclaim over his cute ways. They forgot their homes, their husbands, and even their own children and reveled in the bliss emanating from this divine child."[372]

Throughout my research, interlocutors often also referenced the "cute" behavior of Krishna, who was a bit naughty, stealing things like curd (yogurt) from neighbors. The connection with Krishna seemed to entail a mutual acceptance of the mischievous nature in him and in all of us. Because he was not perfect, I was told at various times, he understands us and is one of us. The flow of love and grace can go in both directions; because he is willing to be known in his naughtiness, we can offer him the grace that he offers to us in our own mischief.

In the center of the Krishna temple I was visiting stands a large murti of Krishna next to Radha, one of his main consorts.[373] There are a few other Krishna murtis and images on the sides of the room, some by himself and some with lovers. Krishna is an important character in several texts in the Hindu tradition such as the Mahabharata (including the Bhagavad-Gita) and Puranas. Through these texts and his bluish avatar hue, he is immediately recognizable and familiar to many Hindus.[374] The room is otherwise empty

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[371] Yashoda is the step-mother of Krishna.
[372] Mataji Devi Vanamali. *The Complete Life of Krishna: Based on the Earliest Oral Traditions and the Sacred Scriptures*, 28.
[373] Some lore suggests that Radha and Krishna were married as children, but eventually went on to marry others. Their love/lust and commitment combined with infidelity to their other partners is complex. Some suggest that Krisha's role as husband to Radha despite her marriage to another represents Krishna's role as husband to all women.
[374] Kristin Johnston Largen,. *Baby Krishna, Infant Christ: a Comparative Theology of Salvation*. (Maryknoll, NV: Orbis Books, 2011.

with space on the floor to sit and pray. I spent an afternoon sitting in the prayer area in the quiet, mostly unvisited room.

During another time at the temple, I joined a tour led by a guide describing different murtis to visitors. When the group touring approached the elephant-headed God, Ganesh, the guide said, "There are stories that explain why these Gods look this way. These stories are for the simple who need these murtis and explanations for their faith. Some of us do not believe them. We are philosophical Hindus. But these stories and depictions are important for those who are more simple." The rejection of murtis by some in Hindu traditions has a lengthy history. Dayananda Sarasvati founded the Society of Honorable Ones, or "Arya Samaj," in the late nineteenth century, promoting a monotheistic view of God and the elevation of the Vedas similarly to the way Christian missionaries were describing the Christian Bible, "eternal as compared to the world; but non-eternal compared with God."[375] King describes multiple influences on the development of positions such as Sarasvati's, and he suggests that the missionary critiques of the ritualism in Indian expression of faith were one of the instigators that may have prompted Sarasvati to create and implement his movement.[376] King continues by suggesting that western and Hindu intellectuals demonstrated special interest in the *Upanisads*, from which elitist Brahmins or others who were influenced by Buddhist tendencies extracted principals leading to the renunciation of traditions.[377] King writes, "Interest in these texts

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[375] Lajpat Rai. *Arya Samaj: an Account of Its Origin, Doctrines, and Activities, with a Biographical Sketch of ... the Founder (Classic Reprint)*. Place of publication not identified: FORGOTTEN Books, 2016. P.45,
[376] Richard King. *Orientalism and religion : Postcolonial theory, India and "the mystic East"*. (London: Routledge. 1999), 123.
[377] *Ibid.*

by western and Hindu intellectuals alike contribute to the development of an image of the heroic and noble ascetic as representative of the core values of Hinduism."[378] Hence, it was against the backdrop of western and Hindu intellectual criticism that the Arya Samaj took a position against murti worship. As is the case with Hindus in India, there is a wide range of perspectives within the Hindu tradition as it relates to modern science in the diaspora. While I never encountered any sense of judgment for a differing perspective of another in the spectrum of belief and practice within Hinduism, there was a strong sense of apology or explanation for believing and practicing when it might have appeared socially odd or scientifically unexplainable to an outsider, as if they could predict oncoming judgment from those listening. The tour guide in the temple seemed aware, as the Arya Samaj, of the perceptions of those who might be criticizing the use of murti worship in his tradition. In hoping for to be true to himself, he seemed to want to position himself as one more aligned with what he considered the elite values of authentic Hinduism. In this way, he was able to balance the hope to be true to himself by alleviating fears of being judged as one who is "simple" and one who also remain committed to participation in his faith tradition.

"Aahana"

I have known Aahana since 2005. She was friendly, funny, four months pregnant and one of the first people I met in Chicago when I moved to the metropolitan area. We met in a group that, once again, consisted of only Indian diaspora members and myself. Though I was not conducting my research at that time, many of Aahana's attributes, interests and

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[378] *Ibid.*

challenges made a deep impression on me. We met inside as well as outside the group, at social gatherings and at our respective homes. When I visited her home, she was excited to show me the temple and wedding photo album that she kept in a centrally displayed case in her home, explaining the ways she celebrated her Hindu faith traditions. During those years, Aahana was eager to share about cultural traditions and religious perspectives stemming from her upbringing in India and her faith.

Aahana had arrived in the US from India shortly after getting married about five years before we met. She had recently completed her degree in literature when her parents arranged her marriage with a man who was also from her hometown of Bangalore, a thriving and modern city in South India, known for IT-based industry, globalization and much more.[379] Aahana's husband-to-be had been living in the States doing IT work for a few years at the time they were engaged. There was a vivacity and boldness in Aahana that seemed to reflect the town where she was raised. Aahana shared that she was feisty at times with her potential husband as they spoke on the phone, just to test him a bit. She knew she had to marry a man who could handle her spunky and teasing nature. Her fiancé rose to the challenge well, and the wedding was arranged after a few months of those long-distance phone calls. Both attractive, young and intelligent, she believed her new life in America with this man would be a smooth and fun adventure.

A few years after they were married, though, Aahana became pregnant with their first child, a daughter. The pregnancy was normal, but the child was born with some digestive

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[379] H.S. Sudhira, T.V.Ramachandra, and M.H.Subrahmanya. "Bangalore." *Cities* 24, no.5 (2007): 379–390.

problems that created stress and deep concern initially. Beyond the concern for the baby's digestion, the rituals and customs Aahana and her husband had planned for the baby were disrupted, such as auspicious times of washing the baby, warding off evil spirits with a black dot applied to the forehead, oil massages and specific foods Aahana should consume for the baby to ingest through her breast milk.[380] Without the ability to perform these rituals at appropriate times due to the hospitalization of their daughter, the concern for the baby was multiplied.

They were, however, eventually able to sort out the issues, and her daughter was a thriving three year old when we first met. Still, as Aahana started to approach the halfway mark in her pregnancy with her second child, she was beginning to remember the exhaustion and stress those first months with her daughter had caused. Even under her bubbly and open nature, there were times when Aahana confided that she was deeply frightened about the birth of her next baby. With a toddler at home to care for this time, she wondered if she could rise to all that might be required if this child also had similar issues. These times of confiding were short-lived, though. After sharing just a few concerned thoughts, her natural pep and positive posture would rally, and Aahana would be smiling and joking again. She relied on her humor, her husband and her social groups to buoy herself back up.

Aahana's second daughter was, unfortunately, also born early and with similar health issues. She was kept in the hospital for two months, requiring Aahana to drive back and

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[380] Ushvendra Kaur Choudhr. "Traditional Practices of Women From India: Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Newborn Care." *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing* 26, no. 5 (1997): 533–539.

forth to feed and spend time with her while simultaneously caring for her older daughter at home. Over the next two years, it was clear that the needs and challenges of this child would not be as quickly resolved. Aahana was beyond tired; she was deeply discouraged. Eventually, she returned to her practices of *puja*, or worship, and chanting with friends from Bangalore that had formed a group in a nearby suburb. She took classes at a local community college to get new credentials for a job in management that she was considering, and she did her best to manage her world with two children with no extended family available to help, except on short visits. Though she did have a brother who lived in the US as well, his family lived in Texas, and they were also estranged. With the exception of her husband, Aahana had to navigate her world independently.

At one time, Aahana invited me to come to her home to experience the meetings of one of her groups that met monthly to chant in Kaanada, her local language. After I arrived, I was ushered up to a room on the second floor that housed her home temple. It had been moved from the central location in the hall of her upstairs floor into this smaller room and placed inside a TV cabinet with glass doors encasing it. About eight women were gathered on the floor using their cell phones to display the words that they would be chanting. Their husbands remained downstairs in the living room, talking and watching TV. Incense burned inside the TV cabinet, and one of the women sighed a few times, seemingly exasperated, as she tried again and again to prop open the glass doors that were designed to snap closed, placing a kind of wall between the worshippers and the Gods within the case. Aahana looked at me and shrugged. After the group had left, she

told me that she used to be more invested in this group. She would leave it now except that she enjoyed the chance to speak Kaanada once in a while, she explained.

After a few years, the initial group where I met Aahana disbanded. With the busyness of our growing families, we lost contact. At the beginning of my research, however, she emailed me quite suddenly asking why I had been out of contact with her for years. She felt slighted that I had not attempted to continue our friendship more intentionally when the group ended. Taken aback, I immediately apologized for my end of it, explaining further that I had wanted to offer space to all in the group who might not want to remain in contact with me once the group disbanded. It had never occurred to her that I might have insecurity about her desire for friendship as she had regarding mine. She explained that she had just turned forty recently and had reassessed many things about her life. She no longer wanted friendships only for the sake of "common" diaspora Indian expressions of culture. She was only interested in authentic relationships now with friends with whom she could "be real." After volleying a few long email updates, we decided to meet at a local library where we could catch up in person. She was interested in my research about hope and was happy to be formally interviewed.

Meeting Aahana at that point was almost like meeting a different person. Many things had changed about her, but the most noticeable was the change to her faith perspective. Whereas in the past, she was excited to explain religious festivals that she celebrated or temple activities in which she partook, she now confessed that she was uncertain about

her desire to believe in God any longer in any form, though she still considered herself a Hindu.

Aahana's journey caused me to reflect on the category of "Hinduism" within the Indian diaspora at present in Chicago. As we talked about her life's influences upon her faith, it was clear that her theological beliefs had undergone radical transformation. Yet, in her confessions about possible atheism, she did not suggest that she no longer wanted to be a Hindu. Anil, in the past chapter, called himself a "cultural Hindu" though he professed to be a Christian. And the first example of hope in this chapter, Nitara, suggested that modern Hindus do not hold the traditional view of marriage across reincarnated lives, or practices of vegetarianism even though they remain very much self-defined as Hindu. Theorists have wrestled with the history and meaning of the category "Hinduism" in America, with some taking the constructivist view that the term was created out of a false clumping together of traditions at various times in history for various reasons. Michael Altman attempts to offer another view of how we might understand the terms by which Indians have been clumped religiously by offering a descriptive narrative of how differing terms were used throughout American history to refer to Indian immigrants. These, Atman states, offer a window into the evolving American perspectives of Asians, and were key to the development of the term "religion" in America.[381] He suggests that we can understand the terms within their historical context to conceptualize what was happening within the populations using the terms, rather than those they were attempting to define. Altman continues,

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[381] Michael Altman. *Heathen, Hindoo, Hindu: American Representations of India, 1721-1893*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

> Rather than pulling 'Hinduism' underneath the ever growing big tent of 'American religion,' this book has traced the contours of how Americans used representations of India in their own constructions and arguments about 'religion.' To expand what counts as 'American religion,' a scholar must assume to know what religion is, and then go and find more of it in new places. To write descriptive narratives of religious people is to know what religion is and then go find the people doing it. Rather than landing on a single definition of religion, the previous chapters have analyzed the variety of definitions in the sources themselves. This has revealed how representations of India and religion 'over there' were important to American constructions of religion at home.[382]

In Aahana's use of her self-definition as a Hindu who had serious doubts about the existence of any God, she demonstrates both how the term is currently used and what it might entail at present in Chicago. Beyond the openness of "Hinduism" as a category to encompass a wide variety of expression and belief, there is also flexibility to the term at present among the diaspora that seems tolerant of one's personal, theological and cultural evolution. At least, this was the case by those who use the term to define themselves. As it relates to the hope to be true to herself, this term itself does not seem to preclude adherents from remaining within the category even when undergoing significant changes in multiple areas.

Aahana came to the library that day with three digital images she had carefully pre-selected as representations of hope that she had stored on her phone. The first was an image of a child on a couch in a war-torn area. With a flow of consciousness, words came out to describe the photo and its significance to her:

> This picture…I see hope over there. A kid on the blue couch…every thing is grey and he's on the blue couch…I see hope there because he is in this rubble and garbage…but he's on this colorful couch and there is a little smile on his face. And he has maybe hand-me-down clothes but he's so happy. And he's playing with his fingers, not

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[382] *Ibid., 140.*

> electronics. I imagine he's thinking, instead of 10-15 years from now, he's thinking what's the next thing I'm going to do. Living in the moment…hope in the moment. Maybe he was chased by his brother. I don't know what happened over there. It was a *she* actually.…hope is this child…the future…hopeful for the betterment…and it's a girl! First of all, you wouldn't be seeing a girl with these clothes…isn't it a great picture?! Even the pillow is so dirty. But she's so happy! I had this [image] even before you asked the question.

Aahana had been raised in a middle-class family in India with plenty materially, and she currently lived in an affluent and reputable suburb in a large home. Her family traveled often on vacation, and their children were involved in many club sports and activities that she sometimes planned months ahead. Hearing about her connection with this photo, therefore, was surprising to me. Her past identity, her habits and her role within her wealthy suburban life, which had included clubs, parties and traditions, seemed to be undergoing some radical reconsideration in Aahana. The spontaneity and wonder of the child in the photo captured the spunk and vivacity that I had previously detected in Aahana, despite her adherence to her planned and structured life. Something else seemed to be behind her description of why this image captured hope for her. I wondered why it mattered that it was a girl, and why the simplicity and disheveled appearance mattered to Aahana. The desire for the freedom and authenticity of the moment that was portrayed in the girl in the photo as she was truly, without posing, cleaning up or having a plan in place, was a hope that Aahana seemed to be communicating.

She showed a photo of a sunset next, explaining that the end of the day is more hopeful to her than a sunrise. To know her work is done and that she can look forward to sleep and relaxation is very hope-giving to her. "You can go to sleep," she explains, "and just hope that tomorrow is a better day." She seemed tired as she said it. It brought to mind her slight fears about the birth of her second child coming to fruition. It occurred to me that

this new, more resigned posture was the result of the years of attempting to keep rising above the fatigue and struggle only to find herself wanting rest and acceptance of the truth about her daughter's issues, and life's difficulties.

Aahana's first two answers seemed initially a contradiction. On the one hand, she loved the unscripted openness of the child on the couch with endless possibilities ahead. On the other hand, she preferred the finish of a day when work is complete and one can finally rest. The juxtaposition of these two photos representing hope echoed, somewhat ironically, the juxtaposition of immigrants' fearful responses to paintings of England's Lake District in a study conducted by Tolia-Kelly and artist Graham Lowe.[383] In this study, Tolia-Kelly and Lowe utilized paintings to provoke responses to "Englishness" as portrayed by the iconic district. Tolia-Kelly writes that the premise of the study is that "the emotional dimensions of transnational mobility shape experiences of place." She states, "Tracing these may bring us some way towards understanding, recording and critically reflecting on cultures of landscape and post-migration citizenship." Though the immigrants viewing the paintings had lived in high places in their former homes such as the Himalayan foothills, the heights portrayed in the paintings made them fearful; they responded to the beauty of the peaks in the paintings with anxiety and a refusal to go there. Their anxiety is recognized as a barrier to going to the heights, which is interpreted as the opposite of the desire to get to the highest advantage point and to conquer. While the surroundings represented in the paintings seem to be appreciated by the immigrants as

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[383] Divya Tolia-Kelly. "Fear in Paradise: The Affective Registers of the English Lake District Landscape Re-visited." *The Senses and Society* 2, no. 3 (2007): 329-352.

a promise of something desirable, their response was an anxious resignation to stay in the lower and more closed-in places. Aahana's appreciation for the wonder and possibilities that lay ahead for the child on the couch in the first photo similarly seemed tempered by her fatigue and anxiety about the work a day required. The emotional rest and safety acknowledged as true needs were symbolized in her second image, the sunset, which was an equally if not more compelling symbol of hope.

Her final photo was one of her two kids. They stood in some exotic vacation spot, the older with arms around the younger. She explained why this was chosen as a symbol of hope:

> I see hope because I see me and my brother. More than anything in this world, it is the bond between the two of you that you have to keep going! I was like that with my brother. I was so close to him and now I see myself so far apart. I see the next generation and I'm hoping that they stay close. I don't know how to do it but I'm trying to tell them….especially the older one. You are the one who has to hold this after daddy and I are gone. Hope for closeness and a bond. This was the only picture where she went and put her hand around her.

Once again, hope is conveyed here in a place of contradictions where past and future are colliding, where loss and desire are mixed. Here, however, hope is coupled with community in an authentic relational connection. These themes are reflected as well through the fieldwork of Amanda Wise in a multi-ethnic suburb in Australia.[384] While she is mainly emphasizing the effect of intercultural work, she synthesizes Zournazi and Hage's conclusion that relationship breeds a sense of "homeliness," which is a cause for hope.

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[384] Amanda Wise. "Hope and Belonging in a Multicultural Suburb." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 26, no. 1-2 (2005): 171–86.
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I met with Aahana once more before she relocated with her family to Atlanta. It was during that visit that the hope to be true to oneself in Aahana seemed most obvious. We sat in the grass of a local park and were trying to finish updating each other on topics that we had not discussed in the meeting at the library. Aahana mentioned that her girls were not turning out "like most Indian kids," especially the younger. She had behavior difficulties that seemed related to her health issues as a baby. Aahana understood this, but she could not seem to improve the difficult relational dynamics that characterized interaction with her daughter. Like Rupa, she was surrounded by other mothers in the diaspora that reported the constant successes of their children, and the ease with which their offspring seemed to fulfill their parents' wishes and recommendations for success. Aahana felt a constant disappointment with her daughter's resistance. I empathized that parenting is profoundly difficult at times and that my own children were also not ideal or perfect kids. She looked at me for a moment before speaking up again. Something happened in the past year, she confessed. She wondered if she could share it with me. There had been an incident. In a typical interaction with her daughter, she was growing tired of the disrespect her daughter exhibited. She had only meant to threaten burning her, but her daughter had reacted and suddenly jolted directly into the heated object that Aahana was holding. It left a sizeable burn on her daughter's cheek for a short while, but it was almost gone now. Her husband saw it and was furious. They took their daughter to a doctor and spoke to a therapist to process any emotional damage. She wondered what I thought of her—could I forgive and befriend her now that I knew the truth?

She went on to share that her best friends are men that she had known from school in India that currently live in Los Angeles in an apartment. They are like brothers to her. Knowing how Aahana was struggling, her husband bought her a plane ticket to visit them, as a surprise for her fortieth birthday. She explained that she had recently flown out to see them and stayed in their apartment. Aahana concealed this from her Indian friends. Even though these men are like brothers, they are not relatives, and it is not typically considered respectable within the diaspora for a woman to fly to a distant city and stay in the apartment with a few unrelated men, Aahana said. She looked at me again and asked what I thought of her now. These confessions were somewhat reminiscent of Rupa's confession of her abortion in Chapter Four, asking me to remain friends with her even if I held other views about the issue. However, whereas Rupa did not seem regretful in her choice to end her pregnancy, Aahana viewed the incident with her child and possibly her visit to her male friends as weaknesses. Her desire to share these events required a deeper level of vulnerability. It suggested that she was hoping to test the strength of our relationship and to be true to herself in the process of admitting tough and painful truths.

In both cases, I responded with questions and the commitment to stay in dialogue about these things. Aahana seemed surprised that I did not appear to be judging her or walking away. Perhaps it is because, like Krishna, I have been honest about my own mischievous side, making it possible to connect in this place of authentic relationship. Perhaps she was looking for the chance to ask for a "hand up" as Lukose was, or the chance to find a connection around something deeply true, like Ruth did. I had been honest about my own struggles at times with parenting, with friendships and especially with being in an

"in between" state as a researcher. The shared stories seemed to offer me a window into the deep hope that Aahana had to be true to herself. This is consistent with the findings of Mahalingam and Reid, in the study I previously mentioned in which they intentionally crossed intercultural boundaries by taking African American women for "an intercultural conversation" with Dalit women in India.[385] The aim of the study was to test the assumption that sharing life stories would provide a deeper understanding of the universal and practical forms of prescribed gender marginalization. It was the sense of mutual marginalization specifically that allowed the life stories to increase the efficacy of sharing stories. Through this study, Mahalingam and Reid demonstrated that "the exchange of life history narratives across margins could contribute to a nuanced understanding of the intersections of gender, other social identities and power."[386] Similarly, I believe it was Aahana's sense for my own desire to be honest regarding my own struggles due to my in-between state as a researcher along with my admission of uncertainty about the best way to parent or build satisfying friendships that allowed her to share her own vulnerability in these areas, and to further acknowledge that she no longer wanted to play a role of pretending or striving. Instead, Aahana hoped to, like the child on the couch in the photo she shared, live authentically in the grit and wonder of each moment, in her most true self.

As we wrapped up our conversation on the grass before getting into our respective cars to drive off for the last time before Aahana moved away, she explained that she was feeling

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[385] Ramaswami Mahalingam and Pamela Reid. "Dialogue at the Margins: Women's Self-Stories and the Intersection of Identities," 254–263.
[386] *Ibid*.

despondent about her brother's lack of response to her. Though she had expressed to him again and again that a brother should initiate regular contact with his sister, he seemed to avoid her rather than drawing closer as she hoped. She had tried to be true to herself in reprimanding him and suggesting he do more to build a relationship with her, but he was only pulling away further. She concluded by asking rather desperately, "What should I do? How can I get him to respond to my messages? How can I get him to act like a brother should act?"

Prescribing courses of action to interlocutors was certainly beyond the limits of my intended participation in their lives. Asking questions and committing to listening deeply without comment except where I was asked about my research, family or life was my usual mode of operation with my interlocutors. However, I did feel challenged in this moment by Aahana's authentic disclosure and persistent pleading for suggestions. A phrase came to mind, and I somewhat reluctantly shared it. "Aahana, I once heard a speaker at a conference suggest that no one likes to be 'should' upon. Perhaps, you could allow your brother to just be what he can be at this time, while being honest about the kind of relationship you would love to have with him one day, if he is able and interested."[387] Aahana's eyes lit up. She seemed to instantly realize that the same force of "should" that she had been placing upon herself was also a weight of expectation that she had been placing upon her brother. As she realized how heavy and smothering the life of obligation and external pressure to be certain things at certain times to certain people had been to her, she suddenly wanted more than anything to set her brother free from those

[387] The speaker was author Brennan Manning during "Spiritual Renewal Week" at Taylor University.

things within their relationship. In pursuing her hope to be true to herself, she was not honoring his own need to be true to himself.

About a week later, I got an email from Aahana saying that she called her brother immediately after our conversation to apologize for all the pressure and accusation she had aimed at him over the past years. She said she simply reiterated that she loved him and understood that he might need a bit of space. That evidently opened the door to a longer and more honest conversation than they had experienced in a long period. She emailed me to explain that she had chosen to allow him to be his truly expressed self at that moment. In return, she received the very real connection with him for which she had been longing. This incident reified my alignment with the position that meaning making is collaborative in ethnographic research.

The conflicting influences that compete in Aahana's process of hoping to be true to herself were clear and taxing. Her past traditions that had manifested in present social engagements were being questioned and altered. Her identity as mother was conflicting with her desire to live without pretense or without merely playing a role. She had fears about leaving the "known" of the past at times, but more often felt a great longing to move in the direction of releasing all that previously known paths had prescribed for her behavior, beliefs and relationships. Control had to be relinquished, masks had to be lowered, and risks had to be taken. Thoughts of the future influenced her; all this seemed to culminate around the time of her fortieth birthday when she was assessing what she hoped the rest of her life would entail and the kind of relationship she hoped her children

would have after she died. In Aahana, there was a deeply felt sense of childlike vulnerability and open-handed trust as she shared the darkest parts of herself and hoped to be accepted with the truth totally exposed.

Chapter Conclusion

As articulated earlier, the hope "to be true to oneself" poses a challenge inherent within the process of communicating others' unique experiences of that which is considered authentic or most true. It would be an impossible—and perhaps dishonoring—task to assume that I could convey the objects, or fulfillment of this hope on behalf of others in a specific way. Rather, the aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate that the members of the Indian diaspora that were part of my research were generally in the process of their own pursuit of truthful experience and expression of self in their lives, which I have broadly sketched. The stories herein have demonstrated that those hoping to be true to themselves desired to move beyond the constraints of the present that have limited the expressions of what the participants believed to be most true about themselves, about life and about eternity. Through the story of Nitara, the hope for authentic conversations that surpass prescribed cultural topics were welcomed and desired as a means to access and invigorate parts of herself that otherwise felt dormant or overlooked. This process involved reflecting on and defining aspects of her life that were normally assumed, admitting limitations she felt in confined social environments, being honest about her marriage and admitting a lack of fulfillment in having successfully achieved all the prescribed goals and attributes that were part of her essentialized cultural role. Next, despite Ruth's high level of marriageability and successful, strong relationships with her

husband and children, which are consistent with the social expectations with the diaspora groups around her, her greatest hope was to be true to her desire to pursue a relationship with Jesus, which is more real or true to her than any human relationship. For Ruth, the hope to be true to herself is reflected in her detached posture of loving deeply in this life while reserving a part of her emotional connection for God and the next life. Lukose and Lissy described their process of hoping to be true to themselves through images and stories about being seen, accepted, loved and helped as our most true, vulnerable and broken selves. These true selves are the most critical places in which to relate with others; being honest about our vulnerability with others allows for authentic relating that was deeply desirable for them both, whether from God or from others. Then, a guide in a temple explained his adherence to a faith that he seemed to anticipate might not be understood by others. His desire to be true to himself entailed admission that some aspects of faith practice do not suit him but are intentionally practiced by others who need a different approach. By separating himself from that approach while still defending his choice to remain in the faith, he was true to his own commitment while also being true to his desire for respect and acceptance from those who were on the tour. Finally, through Aahana's journey of hoping to be true to herself, we traced her path leaving what was known and familiar in patterns of behaving, socializing and even believing to head into unknown territory where she began to search for expressions of self that she viewed as most real. She sought to be known even for her darkest or most questionable acts, and once accepted, she extended the same acceptance of her brother's limitations, allowing him to be his true self within their relationship. Her own hope for to be true to oneself,

once chosen and understood, became the launching place from which she could understand and give to others.

These examples come from the lives of individuals that risked the journey of hope. Even more than the hope to be accepted and the hope to make a contribution, it seemed that those risking the hope to be true to themselves were crossing a dangerous chasm where significant social, cultural, spiritual, emotional and psychological loss or injury could take place if the influences pushing and pulling them in different directions were not negotiated with care and precision. As they left the more defended or masked past behind and journeyed toward that which was revealed, exposing parts of their lives, their choices, their emotions and their longings anew to themselves, to others and to God, many conflicting influences converged in time and space. At times, fears of rejection or uncertainty about the wisdom of leaving what was previously known clashed with the peace they sought in ridding themselves of playing a part they no longer wanted to play. Coming out of hiding or distancing oneself from current attachments can risk fissures in past, present and future relationships. The losses and gains had to be constantly measured. The sense of agency in expressing more of their true selves was somewhat limited since in almost all cases, the responses by others dictated whether these risks would pay off. And yet, in moments when acceptance or a new kind of relating took place, the reinforcement for continuing on in the journey toward being true to themselves was intense and palpable. The peace conveyed by Ruth as she talked about real love in Jesus that is eternal, Nitara's and Aahana's bold departure from cultural conventions towards new expressions of self, and the nurtured fragile places that felt honored in

Lukose and Lissy all captured a kind of new life, new breath in places where none had been previously. The risk of hoping to be true to themselves was paying off, it seemed, as these individuals successfully negotiated all the vectors of influence in time and space along their journey.

Though studies on diasporic experiences of South Asians have been conducted with regard to some influences on this hope to be true to oneself, as well as the previous two hopes discussed in this thesis, an emphasis on the negotiation of hope has been missing from the literature. While studying critical factors such as the negotiation of identities, assimilation, experiences of prejudice and discrimination and the process and effect of building networks and more has been necessary, the culmination of these factors as experienced by the diaspora members in their negotiation of hope has been examined here, adding new and relevant data.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to identify and explain the ways in which hope is experienced and how it functions in the lives of some members of the Hindu and Christian diaspora in Chicago. The question I sought to answer was, "What specifically can inquiring about the phenomenon of hope unveil about this population?"

In this research, the phenomenon "hope" in the manifestations and confessions from within the Indian diaspora in Chicago can be understood as the negotiation of influences such as cultural expectations, emotions, commitments and societal pressures intersecting in a given time within the individual or group. The journey between the present and the desired outcome has entailed backwards and forwards movement that sometimes involved negative emotions such as fear or doubt. Further, I have suggested that both agency and passivity have been experienced in alternately or even in a complex combination at times within the hoping process.

By using this conceptualization of hope, I have argued that there are three present and pervasive experiences of hope that describe and influence the individuals and groups that I encountered. These experiences were the hope to be accepted, the hope to make a contribution and the hope to be true to oneself. Through exploring these hopes, we are exposed to experiences and desires expressed among the South Asian diaspora in many key areas such as 1) marriage and family, 2) racism and discrimination, 3) religious commitments, challenges and movements, 4) intergenerational obligations and concerns, and 5) the activities and perspectives useful in combatting despair, rejection and even

suicide. The identification of these key hopes for the members of the diaspora in this study extends the research forward in specific areas that have been recently named as deficient in major works on the South Asian diaspora.

Let me be clear about what I have *not* attempted to accomplish through this research. By studying hope with these groups and individuals, I have not suggested that 1) hope is always experienced in the ways that I have suggested hope was observed and described in this research, or 2) that this research can be generalized to represent the experience or attitudes of all Indian diaspora even in the Chicagoland area. Hope, as I have suggested earlier, is complex. Its manifestations and functions are extremely personal and seem to be adapted almost momentarily as vectors of influence continue to change around and within an individual or group. Categorizing and describing hope as I have done demonstrates how hope can be experienced and expressed, but not how it must be or always is.

Also, Hindu and Christian Indian diaspora groups in Chicago are constantly changing. Since the beginning of this research, the demographics of individuals and groups, the numbers and kinds of businesses, the experiences of acceptance and discrimination have changed due to continual immigration and the political and societal developments in schools, the community, the nation and the world. This research does not suggest that there is any stagnant or homogenous diaspora in Chicago, or one experience that captures all members.

To support these claims in this conclusion, I will review the main themes presented throughout the thesis, discussing the specific ways each develops a new perspective and contributes to bringing the discussion further along. I will also identify the implications of this project for further research.

Thematic Overview

It is clear that more work on Indian migration and the Indian diaspora has been needed. Historians of India have recognized that consideration of migration into, out of and within India has been neglected, giving a false portrayal of India as a place that has been largely stationary until recent times. Now, scholars are recognizing that there has been much migration for centuries within and across the boundaries of present day India, and many of the current routes are continuations or reactions to former migratory patterns from ages past. These patterns have been critical to understanding the histories aright. Similarly, considering realities of migration is critical to understanding the present influences within India and around the globe. Judith Brown, after establishing that migrants from the Indian subcontinent impact societies across the world as well as those remaining in India, describes the flow of goods, money, ideas and services that are effected by this vast diaspora group. She states,

> Among these flows, different types of movement of people are of great importance. South Asians overseas reflect many of these different types, from unskilled labourers to highly qualified professionals, from small-time peddlers and shopkeepers to multi-millionaire owners of modern industries. Their experience illuminates a key part of recent world history and deserves close attention.[388]

[388] Judith Brown and MyiLibrary. *Global South Asians : Introducing the Modern Diaspora*, 3.

While Chapter Three provided a description of the contextual and historical background of the research, Chapters Four through Six were focused on specific accounts of individuals and groups in the Chicagoland area that provide evidence of paying the "close attention" that Brown recommends. In these chapters, divided into three key hopes, I have described the experiences of those in the diaspora as they negotiated many influences. The three main hopes described herein, the hope to be accepted, the hope to make a contribution and the hope to be true to oneself, are an analytic framework by which we can understand and compare specific experiences and movements within the diaspora.

I have addressed the lack of ethnographic literature on Indian diaspora which focuses on the movements taking place in the suburban Midwest US. Many studies have considered Indians in the city of Chicago, but little work has been focused on tracing the lived realities of those in the broader metropolitan area including the suburban middle class. Since, as Chapter Three suggests, the migration trend entails the relocation of Indian immigrants from the city to the suburbs, or migrating directly into the wealthier suburbs from India, this is an important demographic to consider. Also, while there have been some helpful publications on Christianity in India, there has been very little offered on Christianity in the Indian diaspora in the US. By offering accounts of two congregations, several individuals outside of those locations, and an Indian Christian inculturated group, I have provided new data to extend the research. The demonstration of three specific hopes yielding further insights into the middle class Hindu and Christian Indian diasporas in Chicago provided windows into the experiences of isolation within and beyond the

diaspora community, continual instances of racism, varied responses to stereo-typing and a spectrum of influences on decisions about support and connections in marriage and family. This data suggests that even while attempting to negotiate personal needs and extraordinarily high expectations within the diaspora, members of the Indian diaspora expend much energy trying to also meet the needs of others and enrich the society with their efforts. As mentioned, the three hopes are useful analytic categories into which much of the work of specific factors influencing the Indian diaspora can be understood and compared. The hope to be accepted, the hope to make a contribution and the hope to be true to oneself are not unique to the Christian and Hindu diaspora in Chicago. Studies on assimilation of immigrants, the benefits of immigrants on host societies and authentic cultural expression" of immigrants are plentiful. Yet, these issues have not been considered in one analytic framework where possibilities of a sequential pattern might be considered and comparative analysis can take place across religious tradition. The main themes herein, therefore, can be found within this analytic framework of the three main hopes.

Sequential Pattern of Three Hopes

Throughout the process of analyzing the resulting data of the three hopes listed in this research, I often wondered if these might be sequential stages for most members of the diaspora. Many of those hoping to be accepted seemed to be on the younger end of the age scale of the participants in the study. Though those listed as hoping to make a contribution certainly continued well into their older years, most began their contributory efforts at a younger age, sometimes reassessing to be more "true to themselves" by the time they were older. It occurred to me throughout the study that these hopes may be

common stages through which many in the diaspora would pass sequentially as they move from stranger to native, from insecure to more secure, from reactive to reflective and from one undergoing loss to one open to possible new gains.

Building upon Shakespeare's seven stages of man in "As You Like It," Erik Erikson has suggested that there are eight-life cycle schema through which we all must pass as we age.[389] In each stage, there is a conflict that must be resolved in order for the individual to progress in a healthy manner into the next stage of life. While there is some controversy as to whether one can regress to complete an earlier stage at a later time in life, these stages are generally understood as sequential. As I reflected upon the last three of Erikson's stages, I noticed a correlation with the three hopes I observed in the Indian diaspora in Chicago. In fact, these hopes correlate quite usefully with the last three stages in Erikson's life cycle schema. [390]

Whereas, I have offered the "hope to be accepted" as a category within the Hindu and Christian Indian diaspora, Erikson labels the young adult life stage "Intimacy v. Isolation."[391] During this early adult life stage, Erikson suggests that the individual must contend with the question of whether he or she will be loved and brought into community or if he or she will be alone. The accounts in Chapter Four of those hoping to be accepted clearly mirror these questions. Within stories about individuals such as Rupa and Deepa, I have traced the various methods by which members of the diaspora have sought to pass

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[389] Erikson, E. (1950, 1963).Childhood and society. New York: W. W. Norton.
[390] Capps, D. (2004). "The Decades of Life: Relocating Erikson's Stages." *Pastoral Psychology, 53*(1), 3-32.
[391] Erikson, E. (1950, 1963).Childhood and society. New York: W. W. Norton.

through this stage successfully. They have acted, assessed, and reacted as they received feedback from their families, their communities and the wider society. Contending with the hope to be accepted appears to be a stage that one must pass as a younger adult member or group of the diaspora, possibly before moving onto the next hope.

Where I have suggested the hope to make a contribution, Erikson suggests that the main conflict through which older adults must work can be labeled "generativity v. stagnation."[392] This seventh stage in Erikson's sequential pattern entails the conflict older adults must face as they come to terms with their limited time left in life. During this period, they often question whether they have anything left to give, and if those around them will accept their continual efforts. The alternative is to be stuck, or stagnant in a place of non-contributory existence. The hope to make a contribution in the lives of the diaspora entails similar questions. Those in leadership in ministry and in the walking club knew that they wanted to be members of a giving community. They wanted their offerings to be received as worthwhile by society. Fears of being viewed as only stagnant or passive recipients or takers characterized those hoping to make a contribution just as fears of the same characterize those in later adulthood in Erikson's model.

Finally, where I have suggested that that last hope is a desire to be true to oneself, Erikson suggests that the final life stage (old age) can be viewed as a time of addressing the conflict between "integrity v. despair."[393] Here the individual must reflect upon life choices and legacy, ideally concluding that all has gone as intended and that they have

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[392] *Ibid.*
[393] *Ibid.*

lived a meaningful life. This kind of reflection correlates to some extent with the hope to be true to oneself. Individuals and groups mentioned in Chapter Six demonstrated this hope by seeking what was most true about themselves because they wanted their lives to reflect what they found to be most important to and about themselves. Like Ruth, they wanted deep meaning in relationships to others and to God. They analyzed what they had been doing and drew conclusions about whether it had gone successfully thus far.

Comparing the three hopes to Erikson's eight stages has several advantages. Erikson's stages describe crises of growth wherein a person must succeed or will become stuck developmentally. The failure to overcome these crisis results in maladaptation and unhappiness until the crisis is resolved. I would argue that the crossing over from desire to the acquisition of the three hopes in this research is a similar critical journey with equal consequences for the person or group hoping. The contingent, sequential pattern suggests a societal responsibility to assist those hoping to resolve the conflict. Within the three hopes I have identified, a sequential understanding suggests that the diasporic community possibly cannot make the contributions that they desire until acceptance is procured, and may not be able to live in a way that is true to themselves if they are not allowed to contribute.

Secondly, comparing the three hopes to the last three of Erikson's eight stages begs the question, "What hopes within the diaspora might mirror the first five stages?" These first five include "trust v. mistrust," "autonomy v. shame and doubt," "initiative v. guilt,"

"industry v. inferiority," and "identity v. confusion."[394] There are clear correlations between these conflicts and those that immigrants face in assimilation, merging or formation of identities, relationships to homeland and host country, racial or ethnic limitations posed by society on academic or professional success and much more. Many of these topics have been researched in the literature on Asian diaspora. It would be a useful endeavor to research them within the "hope" framework and match them accordingly with Erikson's stages to recognize how sequential unfolding might transpire.

Finally, by viewing these hopes as sequential stages within the diasporic experience, we can possibly implement programs positioning those who have successfully completed some earlier stages to be utilized in assisting those still remaining at earlier stages of integration and assimilation as immigrants; mentors could be raised from those who have reached the final stage to offer help to those just beginning their journey. A great many of the conversations I encountered during my research suggested that those sharing the hopes they held felt alone in them. Hence, applying the knowledge of those further along in the hope stages would provide useful guidance for immigrants beyond what is most commonly offered by those aiming to assist immigrants, such as explaining the basics of citizenship acquisition and logistical organization of life in America. A program built upon the sequential stages of hope could bring more of a sense of support to the emotional and relational dimensions of the lives of recent immigrants.

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[394] *Ibid.*

Comparisons of the hopes within the diaspora across faith traditions

Though intentionally not segregated according to religious tradition throughout the chapters, this work does allow for some comparison between the way in which Hindu and Christian Indian members of the diaspora pursue the three hopes mentioned. Comparing experiences across religious tradition can facilitate consideration of the intersectionality of factors relevant for individuals and groups, allowing for a deeper understanding of how the influences of various factors culminate in specific experiences in the diaspora. Intersectionality, according to Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, enables us "to focus attention on the vexed dynamics of difference and the solidarities of sameness in the context of antidiscrimination and social movement politics."[395] Thus, the comparison of similarities across religion might be useful in identifying commonalities by which to bridge these often divergent groups, while the comparison of differences might allow ethnicity to be removed as an influential factor in situations where one individual or group of Indian diaspora fares better in moving toward a hope than another.

Marriageability, Assimilation with In-laws and Women's Roles in Disseminating Faith Tradition

Throughout the ethnographic accounts in this research, we have seen that women have contended with issues of marriage, the demands of their husbands' families, and the

[395] Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie Mccall. "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis." *Signs* 38, no. 4 (2013): 785-810.

expectations inherent within their maternal role as a disseminator of faith within the family. Themes of marriage and family seemed to emerge across both faiths in reference to all three hope categories. We can note the intersection of gender, ethnicity and religion by considering the examples of several Indian women in this research with regard to these roles.

Ideas regarding marriageability are complex within the Hindu and Christian groups in Chicago, resulting in what appear to be seamless connections in some cases, and painful, distant relationships in others. The issue of "marriageability" was considered with regard to the women in both faith traditions by their spouses based on factors including, 1) the ethnicity of the woman, 2) a sense that God was leading or gave approval for the match, and, 3) the academic, professional and financial success of the woman.

In Chapter Four we met Deepa, initially a Hindu. In many ways, she adhered to majority culture trends, with clothing, hairstyle, mannerisms and interests similar to the white women around her in medical school. However, her boyfriend deemed her unmarriageable initially due to his expectations of marrying a white woman. These expectations were reified by his family, who expressed constant disappointment with his eventual marriage to Deepa, in keeping with their racist perspectives. For personal reasons, rather than as a means of becoming acceptable to her husband's family, Deepa converted to the Christian faith. This further annoyed her husband's family because they were committed to a superficial adherence of the faith, and she seemed to be probing for a theological understanding and expression that surpassed their own commitment.

Deepa's story provides a unique perspective of the intersection of gender, faith, race and ethnicity; even in the case of a woman who had already largely assimilated into white culture in Chicago, altered her physical markers, and adopted the Christian faith, her race and ethnicity are isolated as the particular obstacles for being viewed as marriageable and acceptable to her husband's family. Regardless, she sought to perform a role in disseminating her newly acquired Christian faith by enrolling her children in a Christian school and helping them to understand the Bible as well as she could.

Similarly, in Chapter Six, we learned that Ruth also married into a Christian family and expressed a strong desire to understand and express her commitment. However, despite the many ways that Ruth seemed to embody the culturally expected or desired traits for marriageability, Ruth's husband did not select Ruth based on those factors. Both Ruth and her husband Tim report selecting each other out of a sense of God leading them to marry. They both conveyed that they would have married any person they felt led by God to marry, regardless of ethnicity. However, they both were certain that God would only lead them to marry within the Christian faith. Hence, in contrast to Deepa, faith tradition, rather than ethnicity, was the main factor in Ruth's marriageability. Ruth took her role as a disseminator of the faith very seriously, like Deepa. As mentioned, she spent the majority of her time driving, teaching and cooking for her family, and doing ministry with her husband. She brought her kids to Christian programs and volunteered with her kids in Christian ministries. Her identity as a Christian was very closely followed by her identity as a wife and mother. Many others in the Christian churches that I met had similar commitments to their Christian faith first, and husbands and children immediately

afterwards. Though many in the churches also had professional degrees and qualifications, in the time of observation during and after church services, those identities were presented as less important to the Christian women I interviewed and observed than their identities as followers of Jesus.

Somewhat similarly, in Chapter Four, Jyothi reported a sense of being led to marry her husband by the guru of the nearby ashram. Though the arrangement of their marriage entailed the consideration of caste and astrological alignment by their families, Jyothi believes that it was the guru who really brought them together. Therefore, her marriageability was managed through the guru as well. However, her role as wife required the relinquishing of Gods, a sacrifice Jyothi was willing to make for the sake of a strong marriage. Unlike Deepa's husband and in-laws, Jyothi's husband and his family responded very favorably to the changes Jyothi made. Perhaps this may have been more complicated if race and ethnicity were in conflict with the family's expectations, as they were for Deepa. Jyothi's role as a disseminator of the faith was extremely important to Jyothi. In order to disseminate the faith to her kids, she had designated certain days of the week for her family to worship certain Gods, and she involved her daughter in the family business as a way to involve her in the worship of Lakshmi by pursuing wealth.

Sindu, in Chapter One, and Shanta, in Chapter Six, were the only two Hindu women that I met who had marriages that had not been arranged. In the stories of both women, the impact of their faith on how they viewed marriage was striking. For Sindu, it was Ganesh that had been her refuge as her husband went to request her family's permission to marry

Sindu. She did not report feeling led by God to marry her husband, but did sense that Ganesh was instrumental in allowing the marriage to move forward. Shanta did not reference Sati with regard to the selection or ability to marry Aarush, but Sati was Shanta's inspiration for how to be a devoted wife and daughter-in-law. In her case, marriageability was determined by her in-law's consideration of Shanta's educational and professional successes. For Shanta, her role in disseminating faith to her child had just begun, but it was clear that she would be attempting the task with close adherence to her mother-in-law's instruction. Sindu described her daughter's note as a symbol of her hope to raise a caring, selfless child. Though she involved her children in religious festivals and traditions, she seemed as interested in disseminating character qualities as much as faith tradition. This was also the case with many of the Hindu women in the walking group. Their conversations suggested that, though they often involved their children in the traditions and religious celebrations, their main concerns revolved around the successes, achievements and character traits of children, and the means by which they could ensure those.

Therefore, I have demonstrated that marriage and family are extremely important across faith tradition for women in the Indian diaspora, but qualifications for marriageability are quite diverse. Some became marriageable through God's leading, some through professional positions or faith adherence, and some were never quite viewed as marriageable enough because of ethnic and racial prejudices. The women in churches or other Christian settings often vocalized that their marriage was second to their commitment to Jesus. Some Hindu women seemed to make substantial sacrifices within

the umbrella of Hindu worship, in some ways positioning their marriage above their commitment to a particular God within the Hindu pantheon. There seemed to be a consistently strong concern to please the family of their husbands in women of both faith traditions. And while both groups involved their children in faith traditions and practices, expecting their children to carry on in the faith, the women in the Hindu groups seemed to advocate values of academic, professional and financial success as much as they actively promoted the adherence to faith with their children, aside from worshiping in the home and celebrating festivals. This might be partially because advocating those values is consistent with the working out of the expectations of their faith, and can therefore not be separated from faith expression. Within the Christian groups, values such as service to the poor, resting one day a week, donating money and even going into full-time ministry seemed to contradict the pressures within the diaspora to become affluent through working excessively long hours, becoming educated, gaining professional skills and raising exceptionally successful children.

This consideration of marriageability, assimilation with in-laws and women's roles in disseminating faith tradition between Christian and Hindu groups can be useful in several ways. First, empathy between women of faith traditions can develop through consideration of the concept of marriageability, especially through recognizing that the use of it as an assessment of whether a woman is worthy or adequate as a match is a potentially damaging. Discussion about stereotypes about the kinds of women that are marriageable could amalgamate women across faith traditions in the diaspora. Further, understanding that marriageability is complex in both love and arranged marriage could

break stereotypes or assumptions about women in both categories. Recognizing the shared values of disseminating faith traditions to children could also be the means by which women in both groups could relate, especially with regard to the challenges of performing that task within the larger society that may not reinforce or share the values of the faith one is trying to promote.

Physical Fitness and Markers of Racial and Ethnic Expression

Another theme across faith traditions was the reoccurring concern for physical expressions of self. Sometimes, this manifested in a focus on physical fitness through exercise and diet, albeit in a distinct manner from that of the majority culture. In Chapter Five, I described a local walking group that was intentionally formed to be a multi-cultural group, but remained entirely comprised of Indian diaspora years after it was formed. While the walking group was initiated as a means to help women grow in fitness, and there was intense pressure on members to meet personal fitness goals and to upload photo collages of walks, the actual level of fitness needed or advised was widely varied. Many of the women in the group were employed with full-time professional jobs and were expected to meet the needs of their families. Given the pace of life and the suburban community design, which requires driving rather than walking or biking to local shops and many schools, staying in optimal physical condition is quite difficult. There were many woman in the groups who admittedly struggled with a sedentary lifestyle, weight gain and related health complications. So while physical fitness seemed to be a value generally, pursuits of body shape or body image were not the driving goals much of the time, especially compared to majority culture where pounds on a scale and muscle mass

index dictate success or failure. In fact, as mentioned in the walking club ball account, many women very freely demonstrated their size, shape and age with a noted abandon. If there was shame around any of those elements of physicality, it was very well concealed. Thus, physical fitness, while occurring in this account was a point of emphasis in my research, it was pursued with a comparable freedom that did not seem to dictate self-expression or self-worth.

Dietary choices were a steady topic of conversation in many groups and with many individuals. For example, Jyothi shared her concern with offering healthier alternatives to Lakshmi, which she would consume herself after puja. Rupa shared tips from her dietician that were helping her make choices to support her digital health regime in an effort to avoid the diabetes that plagued her family. Countless other conversations also transpired regarding the healthiest oils to use in cooking, the benefits of turmeric and tulsi basil and the common admission of switching from tea consumption to coffee because it necessitated less sugar. While the Hindu participants were most often vegetarian because of religious convictions, they also often touted scientific or allegorical evidence for the benefits for vegetarianism on health and the environment. Many of them, as well as many of the Christian members of the diaspora I met managed to fit in some gardening of fresh vegetables and herbs because they were convinced of the dietary benefits as well. These choices were a place where the pressures or tendencies within the diaspora fit well with trends within the surrounding community. The growing presence of Indian grocers in the area supply the unique ingredients or products that those in the diaspora chose for health purposes. As the growing population of Indian diaspora in the suburbs is recognized,

even the most common grocers filled their shelves with more items that were desirable for dietary choices within the diaspora. In fact, growing numbers of non-Indian residents have recognized the benefits of some of these products and respect the advice of Indian dieticians or Ayurvedic practitioners. Thus, while exercise habits may have left the diaspora members feeling isolated, the emphasis on physical health through diet seems to be a point of respect and possibly assimilation.

Several accounts within this research demonstrate a concern within the diaspora regarding choices and wisdom of displaying race and ethnicity through physical features and fashion. Again, we can find this represented in the life of Deepa who experienced intense racial discrimination despite having altered her physical "markers" to a much greater extent than most of the other women I met within the diaspora. Beyond her own husband initially rejecting her based on her genetic inheritance which could not produce white features in their offspring, his parents and siblings further judged her for not being culturally attuned since she had been raised partially in India, and by an immigrant family. Though her actions and choices conveyed a constant willingness to acclimate and to overlook their dismissive or critical judgment of her, she nonetheless hoped for real acceptance. Deepa's story demonstrates that many in the diaspora have to contend with pressures regarding expressions of race and ethnicity both from within and without the diaspora community that are sometimes at odds with each other. By her manner of dress, the coloring and styling of her hair and even her choice of a white husband, Deepa was willing to stray from the more common choices within the diaspora, As mentioned in Chapter Four, I was only able to initially discern Deepa's possible ethnicity by her name.

However, for those who are racially prejudiced, there are no choices members of the Indian diaspora can make that will alter their acts of racial discrimination.

Another common theme across the three hope categories, and across faith tradition was the issue of fairness of skin. In Chapter Five, I mention conversations I had during the walking club about the use of products to lighten the skin. In chapter Six, I quoted several studied on markers of marriageability in South Asian women; among the common recommendations, fairness of skin is often listed. Indeed, this is and has been a longstanding value in the Indian communities stemming directly back to their lives in India where skin lightening cream as been sold as a beauty aid for centuries. The origin of the valuing of light skin in India is debated, but is often connected with the genetic influence of Aryans in the north upon the population, yielding taller and lighter skinned offspring. Because of their connection to Aryan or Mogul societies, wealth and power were associated with light skin. By contrast, the shorter, more angular and darker skinned tribal communities had less opportunities for wealth, education and privilege. However, the more common connection with the valuing of lighter skin is the effect of colonization by the British and other Europeans who established trading posts in India in the 17th Century. Thus, lighter skin was quite easily equated with power, privilege and money across the nation. Others assert that the valuing of light skin dates far before either of these socio-historical influences. In any case, with regard to the diaspora, it was clear that the valuing of light skin came more from their desire to be deemed marriageable or beautiful from within the diasporic community, rather, in most cases, than to please those

outside of it. Discrimination in the Chicagoland area by those outside of the community seemed equally distributed against light skinned or darker skinned Indians.

Assimilation of Culture in the Context of Faith

Another area that is useful to consider across faith traditions is the means by which the groups or individuals have negotiated ethnic religious identity within the larger sociological context in Chicago, and the degrees to which they were successful in that endeavor.

In Chapter Five, I described the Indian Christian Congregation that was attempting to attract more people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The new pastor suggested that the congregation no longer wear traditionally Indian attire such as saris or shalwar kameez. The Indian church, however, was not successful in attempting to make those changes; the congregation felt that expressions of traditionally Indian culture should be allowed in a church welcoming those from all ethnic backgrounds, including those embodying traditional expressions of dress, music, food and language. The church underwent a very painful process of reviewing the value of their ethnic identity within the faith tradition. In the end, they found a renewed ability to accept the value of their Indian expression of ethnicity within their vision of a multi-cultural community of Christian worship. Whereas many majority culture churches in the area must consider the means by which they can appeal to the wider community, the level of identity assessment and relational strain from the process within an immigrant faith community was far more arduous and costly. Though they had renewed their vision of becoming an international

community, they had not expanded in multi-cultural attendance at the time my research concluded.

The walking group in Chapter Six, almost exclusively comprised of Hindu women, had a similar dream of becoming a multi-cultural group. Having already adopted apparel for fitness activities typical of the majority culture, and arranged to walk in public spaces that were occupied by people of all ethnicities, the leaders had demonstrated an intentional willingness to put aside ethnicity for the sake of becoming attractive to people of other groups. However, during the announcements, references were often made to subgroups meeting privately for Hindu holidays, and various groups spoke languages that excluded others at times. Thus, despite the walking apparel and location, there was a slight sense in which the group was not entirely inclusive of those outside of the Hindu tradition or outside of Indian ethnicity. The leaders had created a strong community of women empowering one another to fitness demonstrating the successful attainment of a part of their vision. However, the time I left the group, however, it still was comprised of about 100 exclusively Hindu Indian women. Here again, faith and ethnicity combine to challenge the goal of becoming multi-cultural in ways that cause painful reflection on identity within the greater community.

Through the story of Joseph and Susan in Chapter Six, we also considered the negotiation of ethnicity and faith of the young people in the church. Susan and Joseph had already learned to deal with opposition to ethnicity because Joseph's family had not wanted Joseph to marry a white woman. Susan and Joseph were intentionally choosing to live in

Chicago, far away from their children and grandchildren, because they believed they could have a critical impact in helping the young people in the church navigate the negotiation of their Indian ethnicity and their Christian faith in a postmodern society. They had just begun the ministry at the time of my research, so their success at this task was not determined, but seemed likely based on research regarding the presence of a leader committed to helping the young people deeply internalize and adhere to the cultural and faith values within the church. While their past had been painful due to Susan's ethnicity being a disappointment to Joseph's family, their combined ethnicity in the faith context now seemed to position them uniquely to be a bridge as leaders for the youth in the church, able to both connect with the Indian Christian heritage and yet also able to reach into the postmodern majority culture around them.

Another group that intentionally tried to navigate the balance of ethnicity and faith was the Satsang community led by Anil ji. In contrast to ICC, the leadership definitely accepted and encouraged the expression of Indian ethnicity as a means to create familiarity for those within the Indian community wishing to visit. As mentioned in Chapter Six, this community of Christian worship intentionally adopting an ethnically Indian approach to faith expression attracted more of a variety of people from other ethnicities than the churches that were comprised of Indians worshipping Jesus in a more typically "western" style of church. While Anil and other leaders certainly welcomed everyone from any ethnicity, the target audience was Indian diaspora. This is consistent with the popularity of other expressions of ethnically Indian Christianity such as that of Sadhu Sundar Singh, who gained a far greater following in Europe than he did in his

native India.[396] In this context, combining faith with ethnic expression was considered valuable rather than a hindrance to the goals of the ministry.

Beyond these groups, individuals throughout demonstrated the process of negotiating faith and Indian ethnicity. In Chapter six, Nitara and Aahana moved in and out of diaspora groups attempting to reinforce aspects of their diaspora cultural identity while also seeking a truer expression of themselves. In Nitara's case, participation in Hindu traditions was never in question. She has had to revisit her perspectives as her children began to voice opposition to certain faith practices such as vegetarianism or participation in some ritual celebrations, but generally, her cultural assimilation into life in America has not much altered her own faith expression. Aahana, on the other hand, has perhaps assimilated more in religious belief than in cultural expression. Though she has admitted to denouncing her family Gods and abandoning the celebration of festivals and worship, Aahana still self-identifies as a Hindu, still wears Indian style clothing, remains in some Indian groups and maintains her vegetarian commitment. Both Nitara and Aahana have been successful in finding a voice that honors both the level of participation in their faith tradition that they desire and also being intentional about which parts of their ethnic identity they continue to express. After more than 30 years in the US, Shobha continues to thoroughly enjoy the embodiment of her Indian ethnicity in the markers mentioned earlier such as clothing and hairstyle, cuisine and social connections. Though she continues to worship in the Hindu inculturated style, she has changed her devotion from

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[396] Miles-Watson, Jonathan. "Pipe Organs Andsatsang: Contemporary Worship in Shimlas Colonial Churches," 204–22.

that of her family Gods to Jesus. Though in the US for about as long, Deepa had fully converted her ethnic expression to match the majority culture, but she remained in the Hindu faith tradition until adulthood, albeit at a very disinterested level. Eventually, she changed her faith tradition as well, and worships in a western style church where most other attendees are white. Both Deepa and Shobha express happiness with their commitment to their faith, but Shobha is much more open to discussing ethnicity than Deepa. While far more "assimilated," Deepa continues to experience far more discrimination than Shobha. Hence, while the paths by which individuals took in selecting aspects of faith and ethnicity that they desired to express were distinct, the strong need to negotiate these aspects of life within the hopes to be accepted, to make a contribution and to be true to themselves within the broader community was consistent.

Overall, individuals seemed to be more successful than groups at negotiating assimilation into life as diaspora members with regard to faith and ethnic identity. Those I met as individuals, did seem to go in and out of seasons of expression or adherence to various parts of their ethnic and religious identity, but generally moved in the direction of assimilation. Both Hindu and Christian groups, however, seemed to struggle in attracting those whom they wished would attend. This is useful data in both cases. With regard to individuals, time seems necessary for the discernment of the aspects of faith tradition and cultural identity that each person will continue to practice. As mentioned, further research could be conducted investigating whether more categories of hope may be found to be stages of assimilation individuals must traverse as they work toward a sense of integration within the Indian diaspora. With regard to groups, identifying a common

struggle with expansion into a multi-ethnic group could generate discussion across groups. Perhaps intentional attempts to integrate Hindus and Christians might model a unity or creativity that would be attractive for outsiders of other ethnicities to join. Research on the Christians in the Indian diaspora has been extremely scant; perhaps with more, we can learn reasons for these difficulties that would help both groups to expand toward their goals of becoming multi-ethnic.

Suggestions Future Research

In addition to the implications listed above, some other questions arose during the course of this study. First, it would be advantageous to pursue research regarding relationships between Indian Christians and Indian Hindus in Chicago. Even though it seems that differences between diaspora members from North and South India seem able to be overcome, religious tradition seems to continue to truly separate these groups. In Chapter Five, "Anil" stated that it is very hard to get Indian Christians engaged in Hindu style worship of Jesus. Though the Center was often quite full of white Christians in Indian clothes taking part in the service, there were only a few Indian Christians willing to emulate Hindu Satsang in worship of Jesus. Though I have not visited the similar Satsang groups that offer inculturated Christian worship in Toronto and London, the photos and videos of these groups depict a similar presence of mainly white attendees, despite the presence of many Indian Christians in those local areas. With the exception of one Indian Christian who occasionally walked with the walking group, almost none of the Indian Hindu groups or events seemed to involve Indian Christians. Anil suggested, in Chapter Five, that this is partially due to a residual sense of mistrust between the groups. Hindus

often still have the memory of colonial oppression connected to Christianity, and Christians have a residual sense of danger from awareness of violence Christians still experience in India. However, research aimed at pursuing a further understanding of this distance within religious groups in the US diaspora could be very useful to facilitate more interaction between these groups.

Secondly, in regard to the hope for acceptance for diaspora members, it seems imperative for host cultures to recognize this hope and address this within the majority culture and between diaspora groups. However, I wondered throughout the course of my study how much this need for acceptance is addressed within the Indian diaspora in Chicago itself. Because of the unique affluence and professional qualifications of most of the people in the Indian diaspora in Chicago, the pressure to perform at optimal levels in academic, financial and professional areas is intense. While these pressures have been recognized as helpful to some families during my research as constant reinforcements on the messages they hoped their children would receive about expectations for their performance in schools and in extracurricular endeavors, these pressures can cause isolation for those who cannot measure up to the expected standards. Even for those who can, the lifestyle required to continue performing at such intensely successful rates cause risks to health and life balance. Research and implementation of programs leading to efforts within the diaspora community to address this issue would be valuable.

Thus, I have shown that the exploration of hope as experienced and expressed in and through the lives of Hindu and Christian Indians in Chicago has produced relevant and

useful data about this diaspora population that significantly contributes to diaspora literature and reveals possible further related projects that can bring unique and helpful future data as well. This project also demonstrates that investigation of a specific, preferably elusive phenomenon within a population using qualitative methods can produce unique and relevant data. Through this method our understanding was broadened regarding issues, tasks and hopes of the members of the Hindu and Christian Indian diaspora in Chicago who took part.

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